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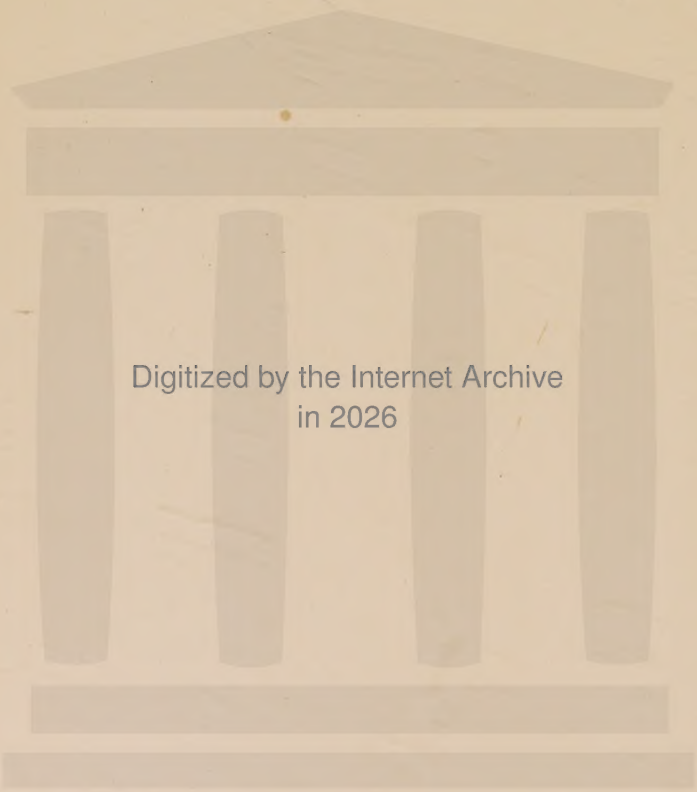
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FATHER, OR UNCLE?

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The Complete Works of William Makepeace Thackeray

ROUNDABOUT PAPERS
THE WOLVES AND THE LAMB
AND LOVEL THE WIDOWER

ILLUSTRATED

VOL. I

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CONTENTS

THE WOLVES AND THE LAMB

PAGE

ACT I. 3

ACT II. 32

LOVEL THE WIDOWER

CHAP.

I. THE BACHELOR OF BEAK STREET 53

II. IN WHICH MISS PRIOR IS KEPT AT THE DOOR . . 72

III. IN WHICH I PLAY THE SPY 89

IV. A BLACK SHEEP 107

V. IN WHICH I AM STUNG BY A SERPENT 128

VI. CECILIA'S SUCCESSOR 145

ROUNDABOUT PAPERS

ON A LAZY IDLE BOY 167

NIL NISI BONUM 173

ON TWO CHILDREN IN BLACK 180

THE LAST SKETCH 186

ON RIBBONS 190

ON SOME LATE GREAT VICTORIES 202

PAGE

THORNS IN THE CUSHION 209

ON SCREENS IN DINING-ROOMS 217

TUNBRIDGE TOYS 223

DE JUVENTUTE 229

NOTES OF A WEEK'S HOLIDAY 242

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FATHER, OR UNCLE? . . . . . *Frontispiece*

LOVEL THE WIDOWER

BESSY'S SPECTACLES . . . . . *To face page* 86

"WHERE THE SUGAR GOES" . . . . . " 96

BEDFORD TO THE RESCUE . . . . . " 130

ROUNDABOUT PAPERS

AN "INTERVIEWER" . . . . . " 174

A GREAT BATTLE . . . . . " 204

THE EVENING POST . . . . . " 214

UNRECOGNISED GENIUS . . . . . " 222

A RIDING LESSON . . . . . " 226

LITTLE DUTCHMEN . . . . . " 254

THE
WOLVES AND THE LAMB

Vol. XXII.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Mr. Horace Milliken, *a Widower, a wealthy City Merchant.*
George Milliken, *a Child, his Son.*
Captain Touchit, *his Friend.*
Clarence Kicklebury, *Brother to Milliken's late Wife.*
John Howell, *M.'s Butler and confidential Servant.*
Charles Page, *Foot-boy.*
Bulkeley, *Lady Kicklebury's Servant.*
Mr. Bonnington.
Coachman, Cabman; a Bluecoat Boy, another Boy (*Mrs. Prior's Sons*).

Lady Kicklebury, *Mother-in-law to Milliken.*
Mrs. Bonnington, *Milliken's Mother* (*married again*).
Mrs. Prior.
Miss Prior, *her Daughter, Governess to Milliken's Children.*
Arabella Milliken, *a Child.*
Mary Barlow, *Schoolroom Maid.*
A grown-up Girl and Child of Mrs. Prior's, Lady K.'s Maid, Cook.

THE

WOLVES AND THE LAMB

ACT I

SCENE.—MILLIKEN'S *Villa at Richmond; two drawing-rooms opening into one another. The late* MRS. MILLIKEN'S *portrait over the mantelpiece; book-cases, writing-tables, piano, newspapers, a handsomely furnished saloon. The back room opens, with very large windows, on the lawn and pleasure-ground; gate, and wall—over which the heads of a cab and a carriage are seen, as persons arrive. Fruit, and a ladder on the walls. A door to the dining-room, another to the sleeping apartments, &c.*

JOHN. Everybody out; governor in the City; governess (heigh-ho!) walking in the Park with the children; Ladyship gone out in the carriage. Let's sit down and have a look at the papers. Buttons! fetch the *Morning Post* out of Lady Kicklebury's room. Where's the *Daily News*, sir?

PAGE. Think it's in Milliken's room.

JOHN. Milliken! you scoundrel! What do you mean by Milliken? Speak of your employer as your governor if you like; but not as simple Milliken. Confound your impudence! you'll be calling me Howell next.

PAGE. Well! I didn't know. *You* call him Milliken.

JOHN. Because I know him, because I'm intimate with him, because there's not a secret he has but I may have it for the asking; because the letters addressed to Horace Milliken, Esquire, might as well be addressed John Howell, Esquire, for I read 'em, I put 'em away and docket 'em, and remember 'em. I know his affairs better than he does: his income to a shilling, pay his tradesmen, wear his coats, if I like. *I* may call Mr. Milliken what I please; but not

you, you little scamp of a clod-hopping ploughboy. Know your station and do your business, or you don't wear *them* buttons long, I promise you. [*Exit Page.*

Let me go on with the paper. (*Reads.*) How brilliant this writing is! *Times*, *Chronicle*, *Daily News*, they're all good, blest if they ain't. How much better the nine leaders in them three daily papers is, than nine speeches in the House of Commons! Take a very best speech in the 'Ouse now, and compare it with an article in the *Times!* I say, the newspaper has the best of it for philosophy, for wit, novelty, good sense too. And the party that writes the leading article is nobody, and the chap that speaks in the House of Commons is a hero. Lord, Lord, how the world is 'umbugged! Pop'lar representation! What *is* pop'lar representation? Dammy, it's a farce. Hallo! this article is stole! I remember a passage in Montesquieu uncommonly like it.

[*Goes and gets the book. As he is standing upon sofa to get it, and sitting down to read it, Miss Prior and the children have come in at the garden. Children pass across stage.*

Miss Prior *enters by open window, bringing flowers into the room.*

John. It *is* like it. (*He slaps the book, and seeing Miss Prior who enters, then jumps up from sofa, saying very respectfully,*) I beg your pardon, miss.

Miss Prior (*sarcastically*). Do I disturb you, Howell?

John. Disturb! I have no right to say—a servant has no right to be disturbed, but I hope I may be pardoned for venturing to look at a volume in the libery, miss, just in reference to a newspaper harticle—that's all, miss.

Miss P. You are very fortunate in finding anything to interest you in the paper, I'm sure.

John. Perhaps, miss, you are not accustomed to political discussion, and ignorant of—ah—I beg your pardon: a servant, I know, has no right to speak.

[*Exit into dining-room, making a low bow.*

Miss Prior. The coolness of some people is really quite extraordinary! the airs they give themselves, the way in which they answer one, the books they read! Montesquieu: "Esprit des Lois!" (*Takes book up which J. has left on sofa.*) I believe the man has actually taken this from the shelf. I am sure Mr. Milliken, or her Ladyship, never would. The other day "Helvetius" was found in Mr. Howell's pantry, forsooth! It is wonder-

ful how he picked up French whilst we were abroad! "Esprit des Lois!" what is it? it must be dreadfully stupid. And as for reading "Helvetius" (who, I suppose, was a Roman general), I really can't understand how——Dear, dear! what airs these persons give themselves! What will come next? A footman—I beg Mr. Howell's pardon—a butler and confidential valet lolls on the drawing-room sofa, and reads Montesquieu! Impudence! And add to this, he follows me for the last two or three months with eyes that are quite horrid. What can the creature mean? But I forgot—I am only a governess. A governess is not a lady—a governess is but a servant—a governess is to work and walk all day with the children, dine in the schoolroom, and come to the drawing-room to play the man of the house to sleep. A governess is a domestic, only her place is not the servants' hall, and she is paid not quite so well as the butler who serves her her glass of wine. Odious! George! Arabella! there are those little wretches quarrelling again! [*Exit.*

Children are heard calling out, and seen quarrelling in garden.

JOHN (*re-entering*). See where she moves! grace is in all her steps. 'Eaven in her high—no—a-heaven in her heye, in every gesture dignity and love—ah, I wish I could say it! I wish you may procure it, poor fool! She passes by me—she tr-r-amples on me. Here's the chair she sets in. (*Kisses it.*) Here's the piano she plays on. Pretty keys, them fingers out-hivories you! When she plays on it, I stand and listen at the drawing-room door, and my heart thr-obs in time! Fool, fool, fool! why did you look on her, John Howell? why did you beat for her, busy heart? You were tranquil till you knew her! I thought I could have been a-happy with Mary till then. That girl's affection soothed me. Her conversation didn't amuse me much, her ideers ain't exactly elevated, but they are just and proper. Her attentions pleased me. She ever kep' the best cup of tea for me. She crisped my buttered toast, or mixed my quiet tumbler for me, as I sat of hevenings and read my newspaper in the kitching. She respected the sanctaty of my pantry. When I was a-studying there, she never interrupted me. She darned my stockings for me, she starched and folded my chokers, and she sowed on the habsent buttons of which time and chance had bereft my linning. She has a good heart, Mary has. I know she'd get up and black the boots for me of the coldest winter mornings. She did when we was in humbler life, she did.

Enter MARY.

You have a good heart, Mary!

MARY. Have I, dear John? (*Sadly.*)

JOHN. Yes, child—yes. I think a better never beat in woman's bosom. You're good to everybody—good to your parents whom you send half your wages to: good to your employers whom you never robbed of a halfpenny.

MARY (*whimpering*). Yes, I did, John. I took the jelly when you were in bed with the influenza; and brought you the pork-wine negus.

JOHN. Port, not pork, child. Pork is the hanimal which Jews ab'or. Port is from Oporto in Portugal.

MARY (*still crying*). Yes, John; you know everything a'most, John.

JOHN. And you, poor child, but little! It's not heart you want, you little trump, it's education, Mary: it's information: it's head, head, head! You can't learn. You never can learn. Your ideers ain't no good. You never can hinterchange 'em with mine. Conversation between us is impossible. It's not your fault. Some people are born clever; some are born tall—I ain't tall.

MARY. Ho! you're big enough for me, John.

[*Offers to take his hand.*

JOHN. Let go my 'and—my a-hand, Mary! I say, some people are born with brains, and some with big figures. Look at that great ass, Bulkeley, Lady K.'s man—the besotted, stupid beast! He's as big as a life-guardsman, but he ain't no more education nor ideers than the ox he feeds on.

MARY. Law, John, whatever do you mean?

JOHN. H'm! you know not, little one! you never can know. Have *you* ever felt the pangs of imprisoned genius? have you ever felt what 'tis to be a slave?

MARY. Not in a free country, I should hope, John Howell—no such a thing. A place is a place, and I know mine, and am content with the spear of life in which it pleases Heaven to place me, John: and I wish you were, and remembered what we learned from our parson when we went to school together in dear old Pigeoncot, John—when you used to help little Mary with her lessons, John, and fought Bob Brown, the big butcher's boy, because he was rude to me, John, and he gave you that black hi.

JOHN. Say eye, Mary, not heye (*gently*).

MARY. Eye; and I thought you never looked better in all your life than you did then: and we both took service at Squire Milliken's—me as dairy-girl, and you as knife-boy: and good masters

have they been to us from our youth hup: both old Squire Milliken and Mr. Horace as is master now, and poor Mrs. as is dead, though she had her tantrums—and I thought we should save up and take the "Milliken Arms"—and now we have saved up—and now, now, now—oh, you are a stone, a stone, a stone! and I wish you were hung round my neck, and I were put down the well! There's the hupstairs bell.

[*She starts, changing her manner as she hears the bell, and exit.*

JOHN (*looking after her*). It's all true. Gospel-true. We were children in the same village—sat on the same form at school. And it was for her sake that Bob Brown the butcher's boy whopped me. A black eye! I'm not handsome. But if I were ugly, ugly as the Saracen's 'Ead, ugly as that beast Bulkeley, I know it would be all the same to Mary. *She* has never forgot the boy she loved, that brought birds'-nests for her, and spent his halfpenny on cherries, and bought a fairing with his first half-crown—a brooch it was, I remember, of two billing doves a-hopping on one twig, and brought it home for little yellow-haired, blue-eyed, red-cheeked Mary. Lord, Lord! I don't like to think how I've kissed 'em, the pretty cheeks! they've got quite pale now with crying—and she has never once reproached me, not once, the trump, the little tr-rump!

Is it my fault (*stamping*) that Fate has separated us? Why did my young master take me up to Oxford, and give me the run of his libery and the society of the best scouts in the University? Why did he take me abroad? Why have I been to Italy, France, Jummany with him—their manners noted and their realms surveyed, by Jingo! I've improved myself, and Mary has remained as you was. I try a conversation, and she can't respond. She's never got a word of poetry beyond Watts' Ims, and if I talk of Byron or Moore to her, I'm blest if she knows anything more about 'em than the cook, who is as hignorant as a pig, or that beast Bulkeley, Lady Kick's footman. Above all, why, why did I see the woman upon whom my wretched heart is fixed for ever, and who carries away my soul with her—prostrate, I say, prostrate, through the mud at the skirts of her gownd! Enslaver! why did I ever come near you? O enchantress Kelipso! how you have got hold of me! It was Fate, Fate, Fate. When Mrs. Milliken fell ill of scarlet fever at Naples, Milliken was away at Petersborough, Rooshia, looking after his property. Her foring woman fled. Me and the governess remained and nursed her and the children. We nursed the little ones out of the fever. We buried their mother. We brought the children home over Halp and Happenine. I nursed 'em all three, I tended 'em all three, the orphans, and the

lovely gu-gu-governess. At Rome where she took ill, I waited on her; as we went to Florence, had we been attacked by twenty thousand brigands, this little arm had courage for them all! And if I loved thee, Julia, was I wrong? and if I basked in thy beauty day and night, Julia, am I not a man? and if, before this Peri, this enchantress, this gazelle, I forgot poor little Mary Barlow, how could I help it? I say, how the doose could I help it?

Enter Lady Kicklebury, Bulkeley *following with parcels and a spaniel.*

Lady K. Are the children and the governess come home?

John. Yes, my Lady (*in a perfectly altered tone*).

Lady K. Bulkeley, take those parcels to my sitting-room.

John. Get up, old stoopid. Push along, old daddylonglegs (*aside to Bulkeley*).

Lady K. Does any one dine here to-day, Howell?

John. Captain Touchit, my Lady.

Lady K. He's always dining here.

John. My master's oldest friend.

Lady K. Don't tell me. He comes from his Club. He smells of smoke; he is a low vulgar person. Send Pinhorn up to me when you go downstairs. [*Exit Lady K.*

John. I know. Send Pinhorn to me, means, Send my bonny brown hair, and send my beautiful complexion, and send my figure —and, O Lord! O Lord! what an old tigress that is! What an old Hector! How she do twist Milliken round her thumb! He's born to be bullied by women: and I remember him henpecked—let's see, ever since—ever since the time of that little gloveress at Woodstock, whose picter poor Mrs. M. made such a noise about when she found it in the lumber-room. Heh! *her* picture will be going into the lumber-room some day. M. must marry to get rid of his mother-in-law and mother over him: no man can stand it, not M. himself, who's a Job of a man. Isn't he? look at him!

[*As he has been speaking, the bell has rung, the Page has run to the garden-door, and* Milliken *enters through the garden, laden with a hamper, bandbox, and cricket-bat.*

Milliken. Why was the carriage not sent for me, Howell? There was no cab at the station, and I have had to toil all the way up the hill with these confounded parcels of my Lady's.

John. I suppose the shower took off all the cabs, sir. When *did* a man ever git a cab in a shower?—or a policeman at a pinch—or a friend when you wanted him—or anything at the right time, sir?

MILLIKEN. But, sir, why didn't the carriage come, I say?

JOHN. *You* know.

MILLIKEN. How do you mean I know? confound your impudence!

JOHN. Lady Kicklebury took it—your mother-in-law took it—went out a-visiting—Ham Common, Petersham—Twick'nam—doose knows where. She, and her footman, and her span'l dog.

MILLIKEN. Well, sir, suppose her Ladyship *did* take the carriage? Hasn't she a perfect right? And if the carriage was gone, I want to know, John, why the devil the pony-chaise wasn't sent with the groom? Am I to bring a bonnet-box and a hamper of fish in my own hands, I should like to know?

JOHN. Heh! (*Laughs.*)

MILLIKEN. Why do you grin, you Cheshire cat?

JOHN. Your mother-in-law had the carriage; and your mother sent for the pony-chaise. Your pa wanted to go and see the Wicar of Putney. Mr. Bonnington don't like walking when he can ride.

MILLIKEN. And why shouldn't Mr. Bonnington ride, sir, as long as there's a carriage in my stable? Mr. Bonnington has had the gout, sir! Mr. Bonnington is a clergyman, and married to my mother. He has *every* title to my respect.

JOHN. And to your pony-chaise—yes, sir.

MILLIKEN. And to everything he likes in this house, sir.

JOHN. What a good fellow you are, sir! You'd give your head off your shoulders, that you would. Is the fish for dinner to-day? Bandbox for my Lady, I suppose, sir? (*Looks in.*) Turban, feathers, bugles, marabouts, spangles—doose knows what. Yes, it's for her Ladyship. (*To Page.*) Charles, take this bandbox to her Ladyship's maid. (*To his master.*) What sauce would you like with the turbot? Lobster sauce or Hollandaise? Hollandaise is best—most wholesome for you. Anybody besides Captain Touchit coming to dinner?

MILLIKEN. No one that I know of.

JOHN. Very good. Bring up a bottle of the brown hock? He likes the brown hock, Touchit does. [*Exit John.*

Enter Children. *They run to* MILLIKEN.

BOTH. How d'you do, papa? How do you do, papa?

MILLIKEN. Kiss your old father, Arabella. Come here, George—— What?

GEORGE. Don't care for kissing—kissing's for gals. Have you brought me that bat from London?

MILLIKEN. Yes. Here's the bat; and here's the ball (*takes one from pocket*)—and——

GEORGE. Where's the wickets, papa? O-o-o—where's the wickets? (*Howls.*)

MILLIKEN. My dear darling boy! I left them at the office. What a silly papa I was to forget them! Parkins forgot them.

GEORGE. Then turn him away, I say! Turn him away!

[*He stamps.*

MILLIKEN. What! an old faithful clerk and servant of your father and grandfather for thirty years past? An old man, who loves us all, and has nothing but our pay to live on?

ARABELLA. Oh, you naughty boy!

GEORGE. I ain't a naughty boy.

ARABELLA. You *are* a naughty boy.

GEORGE. He! he! he! he! [*Grins at her.*

MILLIKEN. Hush, children! Here, Arabella darling, here is a book for you. Look—aren't they pretty pictures?

ARABELLA. Is it a story, papa? I don't care for stories in general. I like something instructive and serious. Grandmamma Bonnington and grandpapa say——

GEORGE. He's *not* your grandpapa.

ARABELLA. He *is* my grandpapa.

GEORGE. Oh, you great story! Look! look! there's a cab.

[*Runs out. The head of a hansom cab is seen over the garden-gate. Bell rings. Page comes. Altercation between Cabman and Captain Touchit appears to go on, during which—*

MILLIKEN. Come and kiss your old father, Arabella. He's hungry for kisses.

ARABELLA. Don't. I want to go and look at the cab; and to tell Captain Touchit that he mustn't use naughty words.

[*Runs towards garden. Page is seen carrying a carpet-bag.*

Enter TOUCHIT *through the open window, smoking a cigar.*

TOUCHIT. How d'ye do, Milliken? How are tallows, hey, my noble merchant? I have brought my bag, and intend to sleep——

GEORGE. I say, godpapa——

TOUCHIT. Well, godson!

GEORGE. Give us a cigar!

TOUCHIT. Oh, you *enfant terrible!*

MILLIKEN (*wheezily*). Ah—ahem——George Touchit; you wouldn't mind—a—smoking that cigar in the garden, would you? Ah—ah!

TOUCHIT. Hullo! What's in the wind now? You used to be a most inveterate smoker, Horace.

MILLIKEN. The fact is—my mother-in-law—Lady Kicklebury —doesn't like it, and while she's with us, you know——

TOUCHIT. Of course, of course (*throws away cigar*). I beg her Ladyship's pardon. I remember when you were courting her daughter she used not to mind it.

MILLIKEN. Don't—don't allude to those times.

[*He looks up at his wife's picture.*

GEORGE. My mamma was a Kicklebury. The Kicklebury are the oldest family in all the world. My name is George Kicklebury Milliken, of Pigeoncot, Hants; the Grove, Richmond, Surrey; and Portland Place, London, Esquire—my name is.

TOUCHIT. You have forgotten Billiter Street, hemp and tallow merchant.

GEORGE. Oh, bother! I don't care about that. I shall leave that when I'm a man: when I'm a man and come into my property.

MILLIKEN. You come into your property?

GEORGE. I shall, you know, when you're dead, papa. I shall have this house, and Pigeoncot; and the house in town—no, I don't mind about the house in town—and I shan't let Bella live with me—no, I won't.

BELLA. No; *I* won't live with *you*. And *I'll* have Pigeoncot.

GEORGE. You shan't have Pigeoncot. I'll have it: and the ponies: and I won't let you ride them—and the dogs, and you shan't have even a puppy to play with—and the dairy—and won't I have as much cream as I like—that's all!

TOUCHIT. What a darling boy! Your children are brought up beautifully, Milliken. It's quite delightful to see them together.

GEORGE. And I shall sink the name of Milliken, I shall.

MILLIKEN. Sink the name? why, George?

GEORGE. Because the Millikens are nobodies — grandmamma says they are nobodies. The Kicklebury are gentlemen, and came over with William the Conqueror.

BELLA. I know when that was. One thousand one hundred and onety-one!

GEORGE. Bother when they came over! But I know this, when I come into the property I shall sink the name of Milliken.

MILLIKEN. So you are ashamed of your father's name, are you, George, my boy?

GEORGE. Ashamed! No, I ain't ashamed. Only Kicklebury is sweller. I know it is. Grandmamma says so.

BELLA. *My* grandmamma does not say so. *My* dear grandmamma says that family pride is sinful, and all belongs to this

wicked world; and that in a very few years what our names are will not matter.

GEORGE. Yes, she says so because her father kept a shop; and so did pa's father keep a sort of shop—only pa's a gentleman now.

TOUCHIT. Darling child! How I wish I were married! If I had such a dear boy as you, George, do you know what I would give him?

GEORGE (*quite pleased*). What would you give him, godpapa?

TOUCHIT. I would give him as sound a flogging as ever boy had, my darling. I would whip this nonsense out of him. I would send him to school, where I would pray that he might be well thrashed: and if when he came home he was still ashamed of his father, I would put him apprentice to a chimney-sweep—that's what I would do.

GEORGE. I'm glad you're not my father, that's all.

BELLA. And *I'm* glad you're not my father, because you are a wicked man!

MILLIKEN. Arabella!

BELLA. Grandmamma says so. He is a worldly man, and the world is wicked. And he goes to the play: and he smokes, and he says——

TOUCHIT. Bella, what do I say?

BELLA. Oh, something dreadful! You know you do! I heard you say it to the cabman.

TOUCHIT. So I did, so I did! He asked me fifteen shillings from Piccadilly, and I told him to go to—to somebody whose name begins with a D.

CHILDREN. Here's another carriage passing!

BELLA. The Lady Rumble's carriage.

GEORGE. No, it ain't: it's Captain Boxer's carriage.

[*They run into the garden.*

TOUCHIT. And this is the pass to which you have brought yourself, Horace Milliken! Why, in your wife's time, it was better than this, my poor fellow!

MILLIKEN. Don't speak of her in *that* way, George Touchit!

TOUCHIT. What have I said? I am only regretting her loss for your sake. She tyrannised over you; turned your friends out of doors; took your name out of your Clubs; dragged you about from party to party, though you can no more dance than a bear, and from opera to opera, though you don't know "God Save the Queen" from "Rule Britannia." You don't, sir; you know you don't. But Arabella was better than her mother, who has taken possession of you since your widowhood.

MILLIKEN. My dear fellow! no, she hasn't. There's *my* mother.

TOUCHIT. Yes, to be sure, there's Mrs. Bonnington, and they quarrel over you like the two ladies over the baby before King Solomon.

MILLIKEN. Play the satirist, my good friend! laugh at my weakness!

TOUCHIT. I know you to be as plucky a fellow as ever stepped, Milliken, when a man's in the case. I know you and I stood up to each other for an hour and a half at Westminster.

MILLIKEN. Thank you! We were both dragons of war! tremendous champions! Perhaps *I am* a little soft as regards women. I know my weakness well enough; but in my case what is my remedy? Put yourself in my position. Be a widower with two young children. What is more natural than that the mother of my poor wife should come and superintend my family? My own mother can't. She has a half-dozen of little half brothers and sisters, and a husband of her own to attend to. I daresay Mr. Bonnington and my mother will come to dinner to-day.

TOUCHIT. Of course they will, my poor old Milliken; you don't dare to dine without them.

MILLIKEN. Don't go on in that manner, George Touchit!, Why should not my stepfather and my mother dine with me? I can afford it. I am a domestic man and like to see my relations about me. I am in the City all day.

TOUCHIT. Luckily for you.

MILLIKEN. And my pleasure of an evening is to sit under my own vine and under my own fig tree with my own olive-branches round about me; to sit by my fire with my children at my knees; to coze over a snug bottle of claret after dinner with a friend like you to share it; to see the young folks at the breakfast-table of a morning, and to kiss them and so off to business with a cheerful heart. This was my scheme in marrying, had it pleased Heaven to prosper my plan. When I was a boy, and came from school and college, I used to see Mr. Bonnington, my father-in-law, with *his* young ones clustering round about him, so happy to be with him! so eager to wait on him! all down on their little knees round my mother before breakfast or jumping up on his after dinner. It was who should reach his hat, and who should bring his coat, and who should fetch his umbrella, and who should get the last kiss.

TOUCHIT. What? didn't he kiss *you?* Oh, the hard-hearted old ogre!

MILLIKEN. *Don't*, Touchit! Don't laugh at Mr. Bonnington! He is as good a fellow as ever breathed. Between you and me,

as my half brothers and sisters increased and multiplied year after year, I used to feel rather lonely, rather bowled out, you understand. But I saw them so happy that I longed to have a home of my own. When my mother proposed Arabella for me (for she and Lady Kicklebury were immense friends at one time), I was glad enough to give up Clubs and bachelorhood, and to settle down as a married man. My mother acted for the best. My poor wife's character, my mother used to say, changed after marriage. I was not as happy as I hoped to be; but I tried for it. George, I am not so comfortable now as I might be. A house without a mistress, with two mothers-in-law reigning over it—one worldly and aristocratic, another what you call serious, though she don't mind a rubber of whist: I give you my honour my mother plays a game at whist, and an uncommonly good game too—each woman dragging over a child to her side: of course such a family cannot be comfortable. (*Bell rings.*) There's the first dinner-bell. Go and dress, for Heaven's sake!

TOUCHIT. Why dress? There is no company!

MILLIKEN. Why? ah! her Ladyship likes it, you see. And it costs nothing to humour her. Quick! for she don't like to be kept waiting.

TOUCHIT. Horace Milliken! what a pity it is the law declares a widower shall not marry his wife's mother! She would marry you else,—she would, on my word.

Enter JOHN.

JOHN. I have took the Captain's things in the blue room, sir.

[*Exeunt gentlemen, John arranges tables, &c.*

Ha! Mrs. Prior! I ain't partial to Mrs. Prior. I think she's an artful old dodger, Mrs. Prior. I think there's mystery in her unfathomable pockets, and schemes in the folds of her umbrella. But—but she's Julia's mother, and for the beloved one's sake I am civil to her.

MRS. PRIOR. Thank you, Charles (*to the Page, who has been seen to let her in at the garden-gate*), I am so much obliged to you! Good afternoon, Mr. Howell. Is my daughter—are the darling children well? Oh, I am quite tired and weary! Three horrid omnibuses were full, and I have had to walk the whole weary long way. Ah, times are changed with me, Mr. Howell! Once when I was young and strong, I had my husband's carriage to ride in.

JOHN (*aside*). His carriage! his coal-waggon! I know well enough who old Prior was. A merchant? yes, a pretty merchant!

kep' a lodging-house, share in a barge, touting for orders, and at last a snug little place in the *Gazette*.

MRS. PRIOR. How is your cough, Mr. Howell? I have brought you some lozenges for it (*takes numberless articles from her pocket*), and if you would take them of a night and morning—oh, indeed, you would get better! The late Sir Henry Halford recommended them to Mr. Prior. He was his late Majesty's physician and ours. You know we have seen happier times, Mr. Howell. Oh, I am quite tired and faint.

JOHN. Will you take anything before the schoolroom tea, ma'am? You will stop to tea, I hope, with Miss Prior, and our young folks?

MRS. PRIOR. Thank you: a little glass of wine when one is so faint—a little crumb of biscuit when one is so old and tired! I have not been accustomed to want, you know; and in my poor dear Mr. Prior's time——

JOHN. I'll fetch some wine, ma'am. [*Exit to the dining-room.*

MRS. PRIOR. Bless the man, how abrupt he is in his manner! He quite shocks a poor lady who has been used to better days. What's here? Invitations—ho! Bills for Lady Kicklebury! *They* are not paid. Where is Mr. M. going to dine, I wonder? Captain and Mrs. Hopkinson, Sir John and Lady Tomkinson, request the pleasure. Request the pleasure! Of course they do. They are always asking Mr. M. to dinner. They have daughters to marry, and Mr. M. is a widower with three thousand a year, every shilling of it. I must tell Lady Kicklebury. He must never go to these places—never, never—mustn't be allowed.

[*While talking, she opens all the letters on the table, rummages the portfolio and writing-box, looks at cards on mantelpiece, work in work-basket, tries tea-box, and shows the greatest activity and curiosity.*

Re-enter JOHN, *bearing a tray with cakes, a decanter, &c.*

Thank you, thank you, Mr. Howell! Oh, oh, dear me, not so much as that! Half a glass, and *one* biscuit, please. What elegant sherry! (*Sips a little, and puts down glass on tray.*) Do you know, I remember in better days, Mr. Howell, when my poor dear husband——

JOHN. Beg your pardon. There's Milliken's bell going like mad. [*Exit John.*

MRS. PRIOR. What an abrupt person! Oh, but it's comfortable, this wine is! And—and I think how my poor Charlotte would like a little—she so weak, and ordered wine by the medical

man! And when dear Adolphus comes home from Christ's Hospital, quite tired, poor boy, and hungry, wouldn't a bit of nice cake do him good? Adolphus is so fond of plum-cake, the darling child! And so is Frederick, little saucy rogue; and I'll give them *my* piece, and keep my glass of wine for my dear delicate angel Shatty!

[*Takes bottle and paper out of her pocket, cuts off a great slice of cake, and pours wine from wine-glass and decanter into bottle.*

Enter PAGE.

PAGE. Master George and Miss Bella is going to have their teas down here with Miss Prior, Mrs. Prior, and she's up in the schoolroom, and my Lady says you may stay to tea.

MRS. PRIOR. Thank you, Charles! How tall you grow! Those trousers would fit my darling Frederick to a nicety. Thank you, Charles! *I* know the way to the nursery. [*Exit Mrs. P.*

PAGE. Know the way! I believe she *do* know the way. Been a having cake and wine. Howell always gives her cake and wine —jolly cake, ain't it? and wine, oh, my!

Re-enter JOHN.

JOHN. You young gormandising cormorant! What! five meals a day ain't enough for you! What! beer ain't good enough for you, hey? [*Pulls boy's ears.*

PAGE (*crying*). Oh, oh, do-o-n't, Mr. Howell! I only took half a glass, upon my honour.

JOHN. Your a-honour, you lying young vagabond! I wonder the ground don't open and swallow you. Half a glass! (*Holds up decanter.*) You've took half a bottle, you young Ananias! Mark this, sir! When I was a boy, a boy on my promotion, a child kindly took in from charity-school, a horphan in buttons like you, I never lied; no, nor never stole, and you've done both, you little scoundrel! Don't tell *me*, sir! there's plums on your coat, crumbs on your cheek, and you smell sherry, sir! I ain't time to whop you now, but come to my pantry to-night after you've took the tray down. Come *without your jacket on*, sir, and *then* I'll teach you what it is to lie and steal. There's the outer bell. Scud, you vagabond!

Enter LADY K.

LADY K. What was that noise, pray?

JOHN. A difference between me and young Page, my Lady. I was instructing him to keep his hands from picking and steal-

ing. I was learning him his lesson, my Lady, and he was a-crying it out.

LADY K. It seems to me you are most unkind to that boy, Howell. He is my boy, sir. He comes from my estate. I will not have him ill-used. I think you presume on your long services. I shall speak to my son-in-law about you. ("Yes, my Lady; no, my Lady; very good, my Lady." *John has answered each sentence as she is speaking, and exit gravely bowing.*) That man must quit the house. Horace says he can't do without him, but he *must* do without him. My poor dear Arabella was fond of him, but he presumes on that defunct angel's partiality. Horace says this person keeps all his accounts, sorts all his letters, manages all his affairs, may be trusted with untold gold, and rescued little George out of the fire. Now I have come to live with my son-in-law, *I* will keep his accounts, sort his letters, and take charge of his money: and if little Georgy gets into the grate, *I* will take him out of the fire. What is here? Invitation from Captain and Mrs. Hopkinson. Invitation from Sir John and Lady Tomkinson, who don't even ask *me!* Monstrous! he never shall go—he shall not go!

[*Mrs. Prior has re-entered; she drops a very low curtsey to Lady K., as the latter, perceiving her, lays the cards down.*

MRS. PRIOR. Ah, dear madam! how kind your Ladyship's message was to the poor lonely widow-woman! Oh, how thoughtful it was of your Ladyship to ask me to stay to tea!

LADY K. With your daughter and the children. Indeed, my good Mrs. Prior, you are very welcome!

MRS. PRIOR. Ah! but isn't it a cause of thankfulness to be *made* welcome? Oughtn't I to be grateful for these blessings?—yes, I say *blessings*. And I am—I am, Lady Kicklebury—to the mother—of—that angel who is gone. (*Points to the picture.*) It was your sainted daughter left us—left my child to the care of Mr. Milliken, and—and you, who are now his guardian angel I may say. You *are*, Lady Kicklebury—you are. I say to my girl, Julia, Lady Kicklebury is Mr. Milliken's guardian angel, is *your* guardian angel—for without you could she keep her place as governess to these darling children? It would tear her heart in two to leave them, and yet she would be forced to do so. You know that some one—shall I hesitate to say whom *I mean?*—that Mr. Milliken's mother, excellent lady though she is, does not love my child because *you* love her. You *do* love her, Lady Kicklebury, and oh! a mother's fond heart pays you back! But for you, my poor Julia must go—go, and leave the children whom a dying angel confided to her!

LADY K. Go! no, never! not whilst *I* am in this house, Mrs. Prior. Your daughter is a well-behaved young woman: you have confided to me her long engagement to Lieutenant—Lieutenant What-d'-you-call-'im, in the Indian service. She has been very, very good to my grandchildren—she brought them over from Naples when my—my angel of an Arabella died there, and I will protect Miss Prior.

MRS. PRIOR. Bless you, bless you, noble, admirable woman! Don't take it away! I must, I *will* kiss your dear generous hand! Take a mother's, a widow's blessings, Lady Kicklebury—the blessings of one who has known misfortune and seen better days, and thanks Heaven—yes, Heaven!—for the protectors she has found!

LADY K. You said—you had—several children, I think, my good Mrs. Prior?

MRS. PRIOR. Three boys—one, my eldest blessing, is in a wine-merchant's office—ah, if Mr. Milliken *would* but give him an order! an order from *this* house! an order from Lady Kicklebury's son-in-law!——

LADY K. It shall be done, my good Prior—we will see.

MRS. PRIOR. Another, Adolphus, dear fellow! is in Christ's Hospital. It was dear good Mr. Milliken's nomination. Frederick is at Merchant Taylors': my darling Julia pays his schooling. Besides, I have two girls—Amelia, quite a little toddles, just the size, though not so beautiful—but in a mother's eyes all children are lovely, dear Lady Kicklebury—just the size of your dear granddaughter, whose clothes would fit her, I am sure. And my second, Charlotte, a girl as tall as your Ladyship, though not with so fine a figure. "Ah, no, Shatty!" I say to her, "you are as tall as our dear patroness, Lady Kicklebury, whom you long so to see; but you have not got her Ladyship's carriage and figure, child." Five children have I, left fatherless and penniless by my poor dear husband—but Heaven takes care of the widow and orphan, madam—and Heaven's *best creatures* feed them!—*you* know whom I mean.

LADY K. Should you not like, would you object to take—a frock or two of little Arabella's to your child? and if Pinhorn, my maid, will let me, Mrs. Prior, I will see if I cannot find something against winter for your second daughter, as you say we are of a size.

MRS. PRIOR. The widow's and orphans' blessings upon you! I said my Charlotte was as tall, but I never said she had such a figure as yours—who has?

PAGE (*announces*). Mrs. Bonnington!

Enter Mrs. Bonnington.

Mrs. B. How do you do, Lady Kicklebury?

Lady K. My dear Mrs. Bonnington! and you come to dinner, of course?

Mrs. B. To dine with my own son, I may take the liberty. How are my grandchildren? my darling little Emily, is she well, Mrs. Prior?

Lady K. (*aside*). Emily? why does she not call the child by her blessed mother's name of Arabella? (*To Mrs. B.*) *Arabella* is quite well, Mrs. Bonnington. Mr. Squillings said it was nothing; only her Grandmamma Bonnington spoiling her, as usual. Mr. Bonnington and all your numerous young folk are well, I hope?

Mrs. B. My family are all in perfect health, I thank you. Is Horace come home from the City?

Lady K. Goodness! there's the dinner-bell,—I must run to dress.

Mrs. Prior. Shall I come with you, dear Lady Kicklebury?

Lady K. Not for worlds, my good Mrs. Prior.

[*Exit Lady K.*

Mrs. Prior. How do you do, my *dear* madam? Is dear Mr. Bonnington *quite* well? What a sweet, sweet sermon he gave us last Sunday! I often say to my girl, I must not go to hear Mr. Bonnington, I really must not, he makes me cry so. Oh! he is a great and gifted man, and shall I not have one glimpse of him?

Mrs. B. Saturday evening, my good Mrs. Prior. Don't you know that my husband never goes out on Saturday, having his sermon to compose?

Mrs. P. Oh, those dear dear sermons! Do you know, madam, that my little Adolphus, for whom your son's bounty procured his place at Christ's Hospital, was very much touched indeed, the dear child, with Mr. Bonnington's discourse last Sunday three weeks, and refused to play marbles afterwards at school? The wicked naughty boys beat the poor child; but Adolphus has his consolation! Is Master Edward well, ma'am, and Master Robert, and Master Frederick, and dear little funny Master William?

Mrs. B. Thank you, Mrs. Prior; you have a good heart, indeed!

Mrs. P. Ah, what blessings those dears are to you! I wish your dearest little *grandson*——

Mrs. B. The little naughty wretch! Do you know, Mrs. Prior, my grandson, George Milliken, spilt the ink over my dear husbands' bands, which he keeps in his great dictionary; and fought with my

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child, Frederick, who is three years older than George—actually beat his own uncle!

Mrs. P. Gracious mercy! Master Frederick was not hurt, I hope?

Mrs. B. No; he cried a great deal; and then Robert came up, and that graceless little George took a stick; and then my husband came out, and do you know George Milliken actually kicked Mr. Bonnington on his shins, and butted him like a little naughty ram?

Mrs. P. Mercy! mercy! what a little rebel! He is spoiled, dear madam, and you know by *whom*.

Mrs. B. By his Grandmamma Kicklebury. I know it. I want my son to whip that child, but he refuses. He will come to no good, that child.

Mrs. P. Ah, madam! don't say so! Let us hope for the best. Master George's high temper will subside when certain persons who pet him are gone away.

Mrs. B. Gone away! they never will go away! No, mark my words, Mrs. Prior, that woman will never go away. She has made the house her own: she commands everything and everybody in it. She has driven me—me—Mr. Milliken's own mother—almost out of it. She has so annoyed my dear husband, that Mr. Bonnington will scarcely come here. Is she not always sneering at private tutors, because Mr. Bonnington was my son's private tutor, and greatly valued by the late Mr. Milliken? Is she not making constant allusions to old women marrying young men, because Mr. Bonnington happens to be younger than me? I have no words to express my indignation respecting Lady Kicklebury. She never pays any one, and runs up debts in the whole town. Her man Bulkeley's conduct in the neighbourhood is quite—quite——

Mrs. P. Gracious goodness, ma'am, you don't say so! And then what an appetite the gormandising monster has? Mary tells me that what he eats in the servants' hall is something perfectly frightful.

Mrs. B. Everybody feeds on my poor son! You are looking at my cap, Mrs. Prior? (*During this time Mrs. Prior has been peering into a parcel which Mrs. Bonnington brought in her hand.*) I brought it with me across the Park. I could not walk through the Park in my cap. Isn't it a pretty ribbon, Mrs. Prior?

Mrs. P. Beautiful! beautiful! How blue becomes you! Who would think you were the mother of Mr. Milliken and seven other darling children? You can afford what Lady Kicklebury cannot.

Mrs. B. And what is that, Prior? A poor clergyman's wife, with a large family, cannot afford much.

Mrs. P. He! he! You can afford to be seen as you are, which

Lady K. cannot. Did you not remark how afraid she seemed lest I should enter her dressing-room? Only Pinhorn, her maid, goes there, to arrange the roses, and the lilies, and the figure—he! he! Oh, what a sweet sweet cap-ribbon! When you have worn it, and are tired of it, you will give it me, won't you? It will be good enough for poor old Martha Prior!

Mrs. B. Do you really like it? Call at Greenwood Place, Mrs. Prior, the next time you pay Richmond a visit, and bring your little girl with you, and we will see.

Mrs. P. Oh, thank you; thank you! Nay, don't be offended! I must! I must! [*Kisses Mrs. Bonnington.*

Mrs. B. There, there! We must not stay chattering! The bell has rung. I must go and put the cap on, Mrs. Prior.

Mrs. P. And I may come, too? *You* are not afraid of my seeing your hair, dear Mrs. Bonnington! Mr. Bonnington too young for *you!* Why, you don't look twenty!

Mrs. B. Oh, Mrs. Prior!

Mrs. P. Well, five-and-twenty, upon my word—not more than five-and-twenty—and that is the very prime of life!

[*Exeunt Mrs. B. and Mrs. P. hand in hand. As Captain Touchit enters dressed for dinner, he bows and passes on.*

Touchit. So, we are to wear our white cravats, and our varnished boots, and dine in ceremony. What is the use of a man being a widower, if he can't dine in his shooting-jacket? Poor Mill! He has the slavery now without the wife. (*He speaks sarcastically to the picture.*) Well, well! Mrs. Milliken! *You* at any rate, are gone; and, with the utmost respect for you, I like your picture even better than the original. Miss Prior!

Enter Miss Prior.

Miss Prior. I beg pardon. I thought you were gone to dinner. I heard the second bell some time since. [*She is drawing back.*

Touchit. Stop! I say, Julia! (*She returns, he looks at her, takes her hand.*) Why do you dress yourself in this odd poky way? You used to be a very smartly dressed girl. Why do you hide your hair, and wear such a dowdy high gown, Julia?

Julia. You mustn't call me Julia, Captain Touchit.

Touchit. Why? when I lived in your mother's lodging, I called you Julia. When you brought up the tea, you didn't mind being called Julia. When we used to go to the play with the tickets the Editor gave us, who lived on the second floor——

Julia. The wretch!—don't speak of him!

TOUCHIT. Ah! I am afraid he was a sad deceiver, that Editor. He was a very clever fellow. What droll songs he used to sing! What a heap of play-tickets, diorama-tickets, concert-tickets, he used to give you! Did he touch your heart, Julia?

JULIA. Fiddlededee! No man ever touched my heart, Captain Touchit.

TOUCHIT. What! not even Tom Flight, who had the second floor after the Editor left it—and who cried so bitterly at the idea of going out to India without you? You had a *tendre* for him—a little passion—you know you had. Why, even the ladies here know it. Mrs. Bonnington told me that you were waiting for a sweetheart in India, to whom you were engaged; and Lady Kicklebury thinks you are dying in love for the absent swain.

JULIA. I hope—I hope—you did not contradict them, Captain Touchit?

TOUCHIT. Why not, my dear?

JULIA. May I be frank with you? You were a kind, very kind friend to us—to me in my youth.

TOUCHIT. I paid my lodgings regularly, and my bills without asking questions. I never weighed the tea in the caddy, or counted the lumps of sugar, or heeded the rapid consumption of my *liqueur*——

JULIA. Hush, hush! I know they were taken. I know you were very good to us. You helped my poor papa out of many a difficulty.

TOUCHIT (*aside*). Tipsy old coal-merchant! I did, and he helped himself too.

JULIA. And you were always our best friend, Captain Touchit. When our misfortunes came, you got me this situation with Mrs. Milliken—and, and—don't you see?——

TOUCHIT. Well—what?

JULIA (*laughing*). I think it is best, under the circumstances, that the ladies here should suppose I am engaged to be married—or—or, they might be—might be jealous, you understand. Women are sometimes jealous of others—especially mothers and mothers-in-law.

TOUCHIT. Oh, you arch-schemer! And it is for that you cover up that beautiful hair of yours, and wear that demure cap?

JULIA (*slyly*). I am subject to rheumatism in the head, Captain Touchit.

TOUCHIT. It is for that you put on the spectacles, and make yourself look a hundred years old?

JULIA. My eyes are weak, Captain Touchit.

TOUCHIT. Weak with weeping for Tom Flight. You hypocrite! Show me your eyes!

Miss P. Nonsense!

Touchit. Show me your eyes, I say, or I'll tell about Tom Flight, and that he has been married at Madras these two years.

Miss P. Oh, you horrid man! (*Takes glasses off.*) There!

Touchit. Translucent orbs! beams of flashing light! lovely lashes veiling celestial brightness! No, they haven't cried much for Tom Flight, that faithless captain! nor for Lawrence O'Reilly, that killing Editor. It is lucky you keep the glasses on them, or they would transfix Horace Milliken, my friend the widower here. *Do* you always wear them when you are alone with him?

Miss P. I never *am* alone with him. Bless me! If Lady Kicklebury thought my eyes were—well, well—you know what I mean,—if she thought her son-in-law looked at me, I should be turned out of doors the next day, I am sure I should. And then, poor Mr. Milliken! he never looks at *me*—Heaven help him! Why, he can't see me for her Ladyship's nose and awful caps and ribbons! He sits and looks at the portrait yonder, and sighs so. He thinks that he is lost in grief for his wife at this very moment.

Touchit. What a woman that was—eh, Julia?—that departed angel! What a temper she had before her departure!

Miss P. But the wind was tempered to the lamb. If she was angry—the lamb was so very lamblike, and meek, and fleecy.

Touchit. And what a desperate flirt the departed angel was! I knew half-a-dozen fellows, before her marriage, whom she threw over because Milliken was so rich.

Miss P. She was consistent at least, and did not change after marriage, as some ladies do; but flirted, as you call it, just as much as before. At Paris, young Mr. Verney, the attaché, was never out of the house: at Rome, Mr. Beard, the artist, was always drawing pictures of her: at Naples, when poor Mr. M. went away to look after his affairs at Saint Petersburg, little Count Posilippo was for ever coming to learn English and practise duets. She scarcely ever saw the poor children. (*Changing her manner as Lady Kicklebury enters.*) Hush—my Lady!

Touchit. You may well say, "poor children," deprived of such a woman! Miss Prior, whom I knew in very early days—as your Ladyship knows—was speaking—was speaking of the loss our poor friend sustained.

Lady K. Ah, sir, what a loss! [*Looking at the picture.*

Touchit. What a woman she was—what a superior creature!

Lady K. A creature—an angel!

Touchit. Mercy upon us! how she and my Lady used to quarrel! (*Aside.*) What a temper!

LADY K. Hm—oh yes—what a temper! (*Rather doubtfully at first.*)

TOUCHIT. What a loss to Milliken and the darling children!

MISS PRIOR. Luckily they have *you* with them, madam.

LADY K. And I will stay with them, Miss Prior; I will stay with them! I will never part from Horace, I am determined.

MISS P. Ah! I am very glad you stay, for if I had not you for a protector, I think you know I must go, Lady Kicklebury. I think you know there are those who would forget my attachment to these darling children, my services to—to her—and dismiss the poor governess. But while you stay I can stay, dear Lady Kicklebury! With you to defend me from jealousy I need not *quite* be afraid.

LADY K. Of Mrs. Bonnington? Of Mr. Milliken's mother; of the parson's wife who writes out his stupid sermons, and has half-a-dozen children of her own? I should think *not* indeed! *I* am the natural protector of these children. *I* am their mother. *I* have no husband. You *stay* in this house, Miss Prior. You are a faithful attached creature—though you were sent in by somebody I don't like very much.

[*Pointing to Touchit, who went off laughing when Julia began her speech, and is now looking at prints, &c., in next room.*

MISS P. Captain Touchit may not be in all things what one could wish. But his kindness has formed the happiness of my life in making me acquainted with *you*, ma'am: and I am sure you would not have me be ungrateful to him.

LADY K. A most highly principled young woman.

[*Goes out in garden and walks up and down with Captain Touchit.*

Enter MRS. BONNINGTON.

MISS P. Oh, how glad I am you are come, Mrs. Bonnington! Have you brought me that pretty hymn you promised me? You always keep your promises, even to poor governesses. I read dear Mr. Bonnington's sermon! It was so interesting that I really could not think of going to sleep until I had read it all through; it was delightful, but oh! it's still better when he preaches it! I hope I did not do wrong in copying a part of it? I wish to impress it on the children. There are some worldly influences at work with them, dear madam (*looking at Lady K. in the garden*) which I do my feeble effort to—to modify. I wish *you* could come oftener.

MRS. B. I will try, my dear—I will try. Emily has sweet dispositions.

Miss P. Ah, she takes after her Grandmamma Bonnington!

Mrs. B. But George was sadly fractious just now in the schoolroom because I tried him with a tract.

Miss P. Let us hope for better times! Do be with your children, dear Mrs. Bonnington, as constantly as ever you can, for *my* sake as well as theirs! *I* want protection and advice as well as they do. The *governess*, dear lady, looks up to you as well as the pupils; *she* wants the teaching which you and dear Mr. Bonnington can give her! Ah, why could not Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington come and live here, I often think! The children would have companions in their dear young uncles and aunts; so pleasant it would be. The house is quite large enough: that is, if her Ladyship did not occupy the three south rooms in the left wing. Ah, why, *why* couldn't you come?

Mrs. B. You are a kind affectionate creature, Miss Prior. I do not very much like the gentleman who recommended you to Arabella, you know. But I do think he sent my son a good governess for his children. [*Ladies walk up and down in front garden.*

Touchit *enters.*

Touchit. Miss Julia Prior, you are a wonder! I watch you with respect and surprise.

Miss P. Me! what have I done? a poor friendless governess—respect *me?*

Touchit. I have a mind to tell those two ladies what I think of Miss Julia Prior. If they knew you as I know you, O Julia Prior, what a short reign yours would be!

Miss P. I have to manage them a little. Each separately it is not so difficult. But when they are together, oh, it is very hard sometimes.

Enter Milliken *dressed, shakes hands with* Miss P.

Milliken. Miss Prior! are you well? Have the children been good? and learned all their lessons?

Miss P. The children are pretty good, sir.

Milliken. Well, that's a great deal as times go. Do not bother them with too much learning, Miss Prior. Let them have an easy life. Time enough for trouble when age comes.

Enter John.

John. Dinner, sir. [*And exit.*

Milliken. Dinner, ladies. My Lady Kicklebury.
[*Gives arm to Lady K.*

LADY K. My dear Horace, you *shouldn't* shake hands with Miss Prior. You should keep people of that class at a distance, my dear creature.

[*They go in to dinner, Captain Touchit following with Mrs. Bonnington. As they go out, enter Mary with children's tea-tray, &c., Children following, and after them Mrs. Prior. Mary gives her tea.*

MRS. PRIOR. Thank you, Mary! You are so very kind! Oh, what delicious tea!

GEORGE. I say, Mrs. Prior, I daresay you would like to dine best, wouldn't you?

MRS. P. Bless you, my darling love, I had my dinner at one o'clock with my children at home.

GEORGE. So had we: but we go in to dessert very often; and then don't we have cakes and oranges and candied peel and macaroons and things! We are not to go in to-day; because Bella ate so many strawberries she made herself ill.

BELLA. So did you.

GEORGE. I'm a man, and men eat more than women, twice as much as women. When I'm a man I'll eat as much cake as ever I like. I say, Mary, give us the marmalade.

MRS. P. Oh, what nice marmalade! *I* know of some poor children——

MISS P. Mamma! don't, mamma. (*In an imploring tone.*)

MRS. P. I know of two poor children at home, who have very seldom nice marmalade and cake, young people.

GEORGE. You mean Adolphus and Frederick and Amelia, your children. Well, they shall have marmalade and cake.

BELLA. Oh yes! I'll give them mine.

MRS. P. Darling dearest child!

GEORGE (*his mouth full*). I won't give 'em mine; but they can have another pot, you know. You have always got a basket with you, Mrs. Prior. I know you have. You had it that day you took the cold fowl.

MRS. P. For the poor blind black man! oh, how thankful he was!

GEORGE. I don't know whether it was for a black man. Mary, get us another pot of marmalade.

MARY. I don't know, Master George.

GEORGE. I *will* have another pot of marmalade. If you don't, I'll—I'll smash everything—I will.

BELLA. Oh, you naughty rude boy!

GEORGE. Hold *your* tongue. I *will* have it. Mary shall go and get it.

MRS. P. Do humour him, Mary; and I'm sure my poor children at home will be the better for it.

GEORGE. There's your basket! now put this cake in, and this pat of butter, and this sugar. Hurray, hurray! Oh, what jolly fun! Tell Adolphus and Amelia I sent it to them—tell 'em they shall never want for anything as long as George Kicklebury Milliken, Esquire, can give it 'em. Did Adolphus like my grey coat that I didn't want?

MISS P. You did not give him your new grey coat?

GEORGE. Don't you speak to me; I'm going to school—I'm not going to have no more governesses soon.

MRS. P. Oh, my dear Master George, what a nice coat it is, and how well my poor boy looked in it!

MISS P. Don't, mamma! I pray and entreat you not to take the things!

Enter JOHN *from dining-room with a tray.*

JOHN. Some cream, some jelly, a little champagne, Miss Prior! I thought you might like some.

GEORGE. Oh, jolly! give us hold of the jelly! give us a glass of champagne.

JOHN. I will not give you any.

GEORGE. I'll smash every glass in the room, if you don't; I'll cut my fingers; I'll poison myself—there!—I'll eat all this sealing-wax if you don't, and it's rank poison, you know it is.

MRS. P. My dear Master George! [*Exit John.*

GEORGE. Ha, ha! I knew you'd give it me; another boy taught me that.

BELLA. And a very naughty rude boy.

GEORGE. He, he, he! hold your tongue, miss! And said he always got wine so: and so I used to do it to my poor mamma, Mrs. Prior. Usedn't to like mamma much.

BELLA. Oh, you wicked boy!

GEORGE. She usedn't to see us much. She used to say I tried her nerves; what's nerves, Mrs. Prior? Give us some more champagne! Will have it! Ha, ha, ha! ain't it jolly? Now I'll go out and have a run in the garden. [*Runs into garden.*

MRS. P. And you, my dear?

BELLA. I shall go and resume the perusal of the "Pilgrim's Progress," which my grandpapa, Mr. Bonnington, sent me.

[*Exit Arabella.*

MISS P. How those children are spoilt! Goodness, what can I do? If I correct one, he flies to Grandmamma Kicklebury; if I speak to another, she appeals to Grandmamma Bonnington.

When I was alone with them, I had them in something like order. Now, between the one grandmother and the other, the children are going to ruin, and so would the house too, but that Howell—that odd, rude, but honest and intelligent creature, I must say—keeps it up. It is wonderful how a person in his rank of life should have instructed himself so. He really knows—I really think he knows more than I do myself.

Mrs. P. Julia dear!

Miss P. What is it, mamma?

Mrs. P. Your little sister wants some underclothing sadly, Julia dear, and poor Adolphus's shoes are quite worn out.

Miss P. I thought so; I have given you all I could, mamma.

Mrs. P. Yes, my love! you are a good love, and generous, Heaven knows, to your poor old mother who has seen better days. If we had not wanted, would I have ever allowed you to be a governess—a poor degraded governess? If that brute O'Reilly who lived on our second floor had not behaved so shamefully wicked to you, and married Miss Flack, the singer, might you not have been editress of the *Champion of Liberty* at this very moment, and had your opera-box every night?

[*She drinks champagne while talking, and excites herself.*

Miss P. Don't take that, mamma!

Mrs. P. Don't take it? why, it costs nothing; Milliken can afford it. Do you suppose I get champagne every day? I might have had it as a girl when I first married your father, and we kep' our gig and horse, and lived at Clapham, and had the best of everything. But the coal-trade is not what it was, Julia. We met with misfortunes, Julia, and we went into poverty: and your poor father went into the Bench for twenty-three months—two year all but a month he did—and my poor girl was obliged to dance at the "Coburg Theatre"—yes, you were, at ten shillings a week, in the Oriental ballet of "The Bulbul and the Rose": you were, my poor darling child!

Miss P. Hush, hush, mamma!

Mrs. P. And we kep' a lodging-house in Bury Street, Saint James's, which your father's brother furnished for us, who was an extensive oil-merchant. He brought you up; and afterwards he quarrelled with my poor James, Robert Prior did, and he died, not leaving us a shilling. And my dear eldest boy went into a wine-merchant's office: and my poor darling Julia became a governess, when you had had the best of education at Clapham; you had, Julia. And to think that you were obliged, my blessed thing, to go on in the Oriental ballet of "The Rose and the Bul——"

Miss P. Mamma, hush, hush! forget that story.

Enter PAGE *from dining-room.*

PAGE. Miss Prior! please, the ladies are coming from the dining-room. Mrs. B. have had her two glasses of port, and her Ladyship is now a-telling the story about the Prince of Wales when she danced with him at Carlton House. [*Exit Page.*

MISS P. Quick, quick! There, take your basket! Put on your bonnet, and good night, mamma. Here, here is a half-sovereign and three shillings: it is all the money I have in the world; take it, and buy the shoes for Adolphus.

MRS. P. And the underclothing, my love—little Amelia's underclothing?

MISS P. We will see about it. Good night. (*Kisses her.*) Don't be seen here,—Lady K. doesn't like it.

Enter Gentlemen *and* Ladies *from dining-room.*

LADY K. We follow the Continental fashion. We don't sit after dinner, Captain Touchit.

TOUCHIT. Confound the Continental fashion! I like to sit a little while after dinner. (*Aside.*)

MRS. B. So does my dear Mr. Bonnington, Captain Touchit. He likes a little port wine after dinner.

TOUCHIT. I'm not surprised at it, ma'am.

MRS. B. When did you say your son was coming, Lady Kicklebury?

LADY K. My Clarence? He will be here immediately, I hope, the dear boy! You know my Clarence?

TOUCHIT. Yes, ma'am.

LADY K. And like him, I'm sure, Captain Touchit! Everybody does like Clarence Kicklebury.

TOUCHIT. The confounded young scamp! I say, Horace, do you like your brother-in-law?

MILLIKEN. Well—I—I can't say—I—like him—in fact, I don't. But that's no reason why his mother shouldn't.

[*During this, Howell, preceded by Bulkeley, hands round coffee. The garden without has darkened, as if evening. Bulkeley is going away without offering coffee to Miss Prior. John stamps on his foot, and points to her. Captain Touchit, laughing, goes up and talks to her now the servants are gone.*

MRS. B. Horace! I must tell you that the waste at your table is shocking. What is the need of opening all this wine? You and Lady Kicklebury were the only persons who took champagne.

TOUCHIT. I never drink it—never touch the rubbish! Too old a stager!

LADY K. Port, I think, is your favourite, Mrs. Bonnington?

MRS. B. My dear lady, I do not mean that you should not have champagne, if you like. Pray, pray, don't be angry! But why on earth, for you, who take so little, and Horace, who only drinks it to keep you company, should not Howell open a pint instead of a great large bottle?

LADY K. Oh, Howell! Howell! We must not mention Howell, my dear Mrs. Bonnington. Howell is faultless! Howell has the keys of everything! Howell is not to be controlled in anything! Howell is to be at liberty to be rude to my servant!

MILLIKEN. Is that all? I am sure I should have thought your man was big enough to resent any rudeness from poor little Howell.

LADY K. Horace! Excuse me for saying that you don't know —the—the class of servant to whom Bulkeley belongs. I had him, as a great favour, from Lord Toddleby. That class of servant is accustomed generally not to go out single.

MILLIKEN. Unless they are two behind a carriage-perch, they pine away, as one love-bird does without his mate!

LADY K. No doubt! no doubt! I only say you are not accustomed here—in this kind of establishment, you understand—to that class of——

MRS. B. Lady Kicklebury! is my son's establishment not good enough for any powdered monster in England? Is the house of a British merchant?——

LADY K. My dear creature! my dear creature! it *is* the house of a British merchant, and a very comfortable house.

MRS. B. Yes, as you find it.

LADY K. Yes, as I find it, when I come to take care of my departed angel's children, Mrs. Bonnington—(*pointing to picture*) —of *that* dear seraph's orphans, Mrs. Bonnington. *You* cannot. You have other duties—other children—a husband at home in delicate health, who——

MRS. B. Lady Kicklebury, no one shall say I don't take care of my dear husband!

MILLIKEN. My dear mother! My dear Lady Kicklebury! (*To T. who has come forward.*) They spar so every night they meet, Touchit. Ain't it hard?

LADY K. I say you *do* take care of Mr. Bonnington, Mrs. Bonnington, my dear creature! and that is why you can't attend to Horace. And as he is of a very easy temper—except sometimes with his poor Arabella's mother—he allows all his tradesmen to cheat him, all his servants to cheat him, Howell to be rude

to everybody—to me amongst other people, and why not to my servant Bulkeley, with whom Lord Toddleby's groom of the chambers gave me the very highest character?

Mrs. B. I'm surprised that noblemen *have* grooms in their chambers. I should think they were much better in the stables. I am sure I always think so when we dine with Doctor Clinker. His man does bring such a smell of the stable with him.

Lady K. He! he! you mistake, my dearest creature! Your poor mother mistakes, my good Horace. You have lived in a quiet and most respectable sphere—but not—not——

Mrs. B. Not what, Lady Kicklebury? We have lived at Richmond twenty years—in my late husband's time—when we saw a great deal of company, and when this dear Horace was a dear boy at Westminster School. And we have *paid* for everything we have had for twenty years, and we have owed not a penny to any *tradesman*, though we mayn't have had *powdered footmen six feet high*, who were impertinent to all the maids in the place—— Don't! I *will* speak, Horace—but servants who loved us, and who lived in our families.

Milliken. Mamma, now, my dear good old mother! I am sure Lady Kicklebury meant no harm.

Lady K. Me! my dear Horace! harm! What harm could I mean?

Milliken. Come! let us have a game at whist. Touchit, will you make a fourth? They go on so every night almost. Ain't it a pity, now?

Touchit. Miss Prior generally plays, doesn't she?

Milliken. And a very good player, too. But I thought you might like it.

Touchit. Well, not exactly. I don't like sixpenny points, Horace, or quarrelling with old dragons about the odd trick. I will go and smoke a cigar on the terrace, and contemplate the silver Thames, the darkling woods, the starry hosts of heaven. I —I like smoking better than playing whist.

[*Milliken rings bell.*

Milliken. Ah, George! you're not fit for domestic felicity.

Touchit. No, not exactly.

Enter Howell.

Milliken. Lights and a whist table. Oh, I see you bring 'em. You know everything I want. He knows everything I want, Howell does. Let us cut. Miss Prior, you and I are partners!

ACT II

SCENE.—*As before.*

LADY K. Don't smoke, you naughty boy! I don't like it. Besides, it will encourage your brother-in-law to smoke.

CLARENCE K. Anything to oblige you, I'm sure. But can't do without it, mother; it's good for my health. When I was in the Plungers, our doctor used to say, "You ought never to smoke more than eight cigars a day"—an order, you know, to do it—don't you see?

LADY K. Ah, my child! I am very glad you are not with those unfortunate people in the East.

K. So am I. Sold out just in time. Much better fun being here, than having the cholera at Scutari. Nice house, Milliken's. Snob, but good fellow—good cellar, doosid good cook. Really, that salmi yesterday,—couldn't have it better done at the "Rag" now. You have got into good quarters here, mother.

LADY K. The meals are very good, and the house is very good; the manners are not of the first order. But what can you expect of City people? I always told your poor dear sister, when she married Mr. Milliken, that she might look for everything substantial,—but not manners. Poor dear Arabella *would* marry him.

K. Would! that is a good one, mamma! Why, you made her! It's a dozen years ago. But I recollect, when I came home from Eton, seeing her crying because Charley Tufton——

LADY K. Mr. Tufton had not a shilling to bless himself with. The marriage was absurd and impossible.

K. He hadn't a shilling then. I guess he has plenty now. Elder brother killed, out hunting. Father dead. Tuf a baronet, with four thousand a year if he's a shilling.

LADY K. Not so much.

K. Four thousand if it's a shilling. Why, the property adjoins Kicklebury's—I ought to know. I've shot over it a thousand times. Heh! *I* remember, when I was quite a young 'un, how Arabella used to go out into Tufton Park to meet Charley—and he is a doosid good fellow, and a gentlemanlike fellow, and a doosid deal better than this City fellow.

LADY K. If you don't like this City fellow, Clarence, why do you come here? why didn't you stop with your elder brother at Kicklebury?

K. Why didn't I? Why didn't *you* stop at Kicklebury, mamma? Because you had notice to quit. Serious daughter-in-law, quarrels about management of the house—row in the building. My brother interferes, and politely requests mamma to shorten her visit. So it is with your other two daughters; so it was with Arabella when she was alive. What shindies you used to have with her, Lady Kicklebury! Heh! I had a row with my brother and sister about a confounded little nursery-maid.

LADY K. Clarence!

K. And so I had notice to quit too. And I'm in very good quarters here, and I intend to stay in 'em, mamma. I say——

LADY K. What do you say?

K. Since I sold out, you know, and the regiment went abroad, confound me, the brutes at the "Rag" will hardly speak to me! I was so ill, I couldn't go. Who the doose can live the life I've led and keep health enough for that infernal Crimea? Besides, how could I help it? I was so cursedly in debt that I was *obliged* to have the money, you know. *You* hadn't got any.

LADY K. Not a halfpenny, my darling. I am dreadfully in debt myself.

K. I know you are. So am I. My brother wouldn't give me any, not a dump. Hang him! Said he had his children to look to. Milliken wouldn't advance me any more—said I did him in that horse transaction. He! he! he! so I did! What had I to do but to sell out? And the fellows cut me, by Jove! Ain't it too bad? I'll take my name off the "Rag," I will, though.

LADY K. We must sow our wild oats, and we must sober down; and we must live here, where the living is very good and very cheap, Clarence, you naughty boy! And we must get you a rich wife. Did you see at church yesterday that young woman in light green, with rather red hair and a pink bonnet?

K. I was asleep, ma'am, most of the time, or I was bookin' up the odds for the Chester Cup. When I'm bookin' up, I think of nothin' else, ma'am,—nothin'.

LADY K. That was Miss Brocksopp—Briggs, Brown, and Brocksopp, the great sugar-bakers. They say she will have eighty thousand pound. We will ask her to dinner here.

K. I say—why the doose do you have such old women to dinner here? Why don't you get some pretty girls? Such a set of confounded old frumps as eat Milliken's mutton I never saw. There's you, and his old mother Mrs. Bonnington, and old Mrs.

Fogram, and old Miss What's-her-name, the woman with the squint eye, and that immense Mrs. Crowder. It's so stoopid, that if it weren't for Touchit coming down sometimes, and the billiards and boatin', I should die here—expire, by gad! Why don't you have some pretty women into the house, Lady Kicklebury?

LADY K. Why! Do you think I want that picture taken down: and another Mrs. Milliken? Wisehead! If Horace married again, would he be your banker, and keep this house, now that ungrateful son of mine has turned me out of his? No pretty woman shall come into the house whilst I am here.

K. Governess seems a pretty woman: weak eyes, bad figure, poky, badly dressed, but doosid pretty woman.

LADY K. Bah! There is no danger from *her*. She is a most faithful creature, attached to me beyond everything. And her eyes—her eyes are weak with crying for some young man who is in India. She has his miniature in her room, locked up in one of her drawers.

K. Then how the doose did you come to see it?

LADY K. We see a number of things, Clarence. Will you drive with me?

K. Not as I knows on, thank you. No, ma; drivin's *too* slow: and you're going to call on two or three old dowagers in the Park? Thank your Ladyship for the delightful offer.

Enter JOHN.

JOHN. Please, sir, here's the man with the bill for the boats; two pound three.

K. Damn it, pay it—don't bother *me!*

JOHN. Haven't got the money, sir.

LADY K. Howell! I saw Mr. Milliken give you a cheque for twenty-five pounds before he went into town this morning. Look, sir. (*Runs, opens drawer, takes out cheque-book.*) There it is, marked "Howell, £25."

JOHN. Would your Ladyship like to step down into my pantry and see what I've paid with the twenty-five pounds? Did my master leave any orders that your Ladyship was to inspect my accounts?

LADY K. Step down into the pantry! inspect your accounts? I never heard such impertinence. What do you mean, sir?

K. Dammy, sir, what do you mean?

JOHN. I thought as her Ladyship kept a heye over my master's private book, she might like to look at mine too.

LADY K. Upon my word, this insolence is too much.

JOHN. I beg your Ladyship's pardon. I am sure I have said nothing.

K. Said, sir! your manner is mutinous, by Jove, sir! if I had you in the regiment——

JOHN. I understood that you had left the regiment, sir, just before it went on the campaign, sir.

K. Confound you, sir! [*Starts up.*

LADY K. Clarence, my child, my child!

JOHN. Your Ladyship needn't be alarmed; I'm a little man, my Lady, but I don't think Mr. Clarence was a-goin' for to hit me, my Lady; not before a lady, I'm sure. I suppose, sir, that you *won't* pay the boatman?

K. No, sir, I won't pay him, nor any man who uses this sort of damned impertinence!

JOHN. I told Rullocks, sir, I thought it was *jest* possible you wouldn't. [*Exit.*

K. That's a nice man, that is—an impudent villain!

LADY K. Ruined by Horace's weakness. He ruins everybody, poor good-natured Horace!

K. Why don't you get rid of the blackguard?

LADY K. There is a time for all things, my dear. This man is very convenient to Horace. Mr. Milliken is exceedingly lazy, and Howell spares him a great deal of trouble. Some day or other I shall take all this domestic trouble off his hands. But not yet: your poor brother-in-law is restive, like many weak men. He is subjected to other influences: his odious mother thwarts me a great deal.

K. Why, you used to be the dearest friends in the world. I recollect when I was at Eton——

LADY K. Were; but friendship don't last for ever. Mrs. Bonnington and I have had serious differences since I came to live here: she has a natural jealousy, perhaps, at my superintending her son's affairs. When she ceases to visit at the house, as she very possibly will, things will go more easily; and Mr. Howell will go too, you may depend upon it. I am always sorry when my temper breaks out, as it will sometimes.

K. Won't it, that's all!

LADY K. At his insolence, my temper is high; so is yours, my dear. Calm it for the present, especially as regards Howell.

K. Gad! d'you know I was very nearly pitching into him? But once, one night in the Haymarket, at a lobster-shop, where I was with some fellows, we chaffed some other fellows, and there was one fellah—quite a little fellah—and I pitched into him, and he gave me the most confounded lickin' I ever had in my life, since

my brother Kicklebury licked me when we were at Eton; and that, you see, was a lesson to me, ma'am. Never trust those little fellows, never chaff 'em: dammy, they may be boxers.

LADY K. You quarrelsome boy! I remember you coming home with your naughty head *so* bruised. (*Looks at watch.*) I must go now to take my drive. [*Exit Lady K.*

K. I owe a doose of a tick at that billiard-room; I shall have that boatman dunnin' me. Why hasn't Milliken got any horses to ride? Hang him! suppose he can't ride—suppose he's a tailor. He ain't *my* tailor, though, though I owe him a doosid deal of money. There goes mamma with that darling nephew and niece of mine.

Enter BULKELEY.

Why haven't you gone with my Lady, you, sir? (*to Bulkeley*).

BULKELEY. My Lady have a-took the pony-carriage, sir; Mrs. Bonnington have a-took the hopen carriage and 'orses, sir, this mornin', which the Bishop of London is 'olding a confirmation at Teddington, sir, and Mr. Bonnington is attending the serimony. And I have told Mr. 'Owell, sir, that my Lady would prefer the hopen carriage, sir, which I like the hexercise myself, sir, and that the pony-carriage was good enough for Mrs. Bonnington, sir; and Mr. 'Owell was very hinsolent to me, sir; and I don't think I can stay in the 'ouse with him.

K. Hold your jaw, sir.

BULKELEY. Yes, sir. [*Exit Bulkeley.*

K. I wonder who that governess is—sang rather prettily last night—wish she'd come and sing now—wish she'd come and amuse me—I've seen her face before—where have I seen her face?—it ain't at all a bad one. What shall I do? dammy, I'll read a book: I've not read a book this ever so long. What's here?

[*Looks amongst books, selects one, sinks down in easy chair so as quite to be lost.*

Enter MISS PRIOR.

MISS PRIOR. There's peace in the house! those noisy children are away with their grandmamma. The weather is beautiful, and I hope they will take a long drive. Now I can have a quiet half-hour, and finish that dear pretty "Ruth"—oh, how it makes me cry, that pretty story!

[*Lays down her bonnet on table—goes to glass—takes off cap and spectacles—arranges her hair—Clarence has got on chair looking at her.*

K. By Jove! I know who it is now! Remember her as well as possible. Four years ago, when little Foxbury used to dance in the ballet over the water. *Don't* I remember her! She boxed my ears behind the scenes, by jingo! (*Coming forward.*) Miss Pemberton! Star of the ballet! Light of the harem! Don't you remember the grand Oriental ballet of the "Bulbul and the Peri"?

Miss P. Oh! (*screams*). No, n—no, sir. You are mistaken: my name is Prior. I—never was at the "Coburg Theatre." I——

K. (*seizing her hand*). No, you don't, though! What! don't you remember well that little hand slapping this face? which nature hadn't then adorned with whiskers, by gad! You pretend you have forgotten little Foxbury, whom Charley Calverley used to come after, and who used to drive to the "Coburg" every night in her brougham. How did you know it was the "Coburg"? That *is* a good one! *Had* you there, I think.

Miss P. Sir, in the name of Heaven, pity me! I have to keep my mother and my sisters and my brothers. When—when you saw me, we were in great poverty; and almost all the wretched earnings I made at that time were given to my poor father then lying in the Queen's Bench hard by. You know there was nothing against my character—you know there was not. Ask Captain Touchit whether I was not a good girl. It was he who brought me to this house.

K. Touchit! the old villain!

Miss P. I had your sister's confidence. I tended her abroad on her death-bed. I have brought up your nephew and niece. Ask any one if I have not been honest. As a man, as a gentleman, I entreat you to keep my secret! I implore you for the sake of my poor mother and her children! (*kneeling*).

K. By Jove! how handsome you are! How crying becomes your eyes! Get up; get up. Of course I'll keep your secret, but——

Miss P. Ah! ah!

[*She screams as he tries to embrace her. Howell rushes in.*

Howell. Hands off, you little villain! Stir a step, and I'll kill you, if you were a regiment of captains! What! insult this lady who kept watch at your sister's death-bed and has took charge of her children! Don't be frightened, Miss Prior. Julia—dear, dear Julia—I'm by you. If the scoundrel touches you, I'll kill him. I—I love you—there—it's here—love you madly—with all my 'art—my a-heart!

Miss P. Howell—for Heaven's sake, Howell!

K. Pooh—ooh! (*Bursting with laughter.*) Here's a novel, by jingo! Here's John in love with the governess. Fond of plush, Miss Pemberton—ey? Gad, it's the best thing I ever knew. Saved a good bit, ey, Jeames? Take a public-house? By Jove! I'll buy my beer there.

JOHN. Owe for it, you mean. I don't think your tradesmen profit much by your custom, ex-Cornet Kicklebury.

K. By Jove! I'll do for you, you villain!

JOHN. No, not that way, Captain.

[*Struggles with and throws him.*

K. (*screams*). Hallo, Bulkeley!

[*Bulkeley is seen strolling in the garden.*

Enter BULKELEY.

BULKELEY. What is it, sir?

K. Take this confounded villain off me, and pitch him into the Thames—do you hear?

JOHN. Come here, and I'll break every bone in your hulking body. (*To Bulkeley.*)

BULKELEY. Come, come! whathever his hall this year row about?

MISS P. For Heaven's sake, don't strike that poor man!

BULKELEY. *You* be quiet. What's he a-hittin' about my master for?

JOHN. Take off your hat, sir, when you speak to a lady. (*Takes up a poker.*) And now come on both of you, cowards!

[*Rushes at Bulkeley and knocks his hat off his head.*

BULKELEY (*stepping back*). If you'll put down that there poker, you know, then I'll pitch into you fast enough. But that there poker ain't fair, you know.

K. You villain! of course you will leave this house. And, Miss Prior, I think you will understand that you will go too. I don't think my niece wants to learn *dancin'*, you understand. Good-bye. Here, Bulkeley! [*Gets behind footman and exit.*

MISS P. Do you know the meaning of that threat, Mr. Howell?

JOHN. Yes, Miss Prior.

MISS P. I was a dancer once, for three months, four years ago, when my poor father was in prison.

JOHN. Yes, Miss Prior, I knew it. And I saw you a many times.

MISS P. And you kept my secret?

JOHN. Yes, Ju—Jul—Miss Prior.

MISS P. Thank you, and God bless you, John Howell! There, there. You mustn't! indeed, you mustn't!

JOHN. You don't remember the printer's boy who used to come to Mr. O'Reilly, and sit in your 'all in Bury Street, Miss Prior? I was that boy. I was a country-bred boy—that is if you called Putney country, and Wimbledon Common and that. I served the Milliken family seven year. I went with Master Horace to College, and then I revolted against service, and I thought I'd be a man and turn printer like Doctor Frankling. And I got in an office: and I went with proofs to Mr. O'Reilly, and I saw you. And though I might have been in love with somebody else before I did—yet it was all hup when I saw you.

MISS P. (*kindly*). You must not talk to me in that way, John Howell.

JOHN. Let's tell the tale out. I couldn't stand the newspaper night-work. I had a mother and brothers and sisters to keep, as you had. I went back to Horace Milliken and said, "Sir, I've lost my work. I and mine want bread. Will you take me back again?" And he did. He's a kind kind soul is my master.

MISS P. He *is* a kind kind soul.

JOHN. He's good to all the poor. His hand's in his pocket for everybody. Everybody takes advantage of him. His mother-in-lor rides over him. So does his ma. So do I, I may say; but that's over now; and you and I have had our notice to quit, miss, I should say.

MISS P. Yes.

JOHN. I have saved a bit of money—not much—a hundred pound. Miss Prior—Julia—here I am—look—I'm a poor feller—a poor servant—but I've the heart of a man—and—I love you—oh! I love you!

MARY. Oh—ho—ho!

[*Mary has entered from garden, and bursts out crying.*

MISS P. It can't be, John Howell—my dear, brave, kind John Howell. It can't be. I have watched this for some time past, and poor Mary's despair here. (*Kisses Mary, who cries plentifully.*) You have the heart of a true brave man, and must show it and prove it now. I am not—am not of your—pardon me for saying so—of your class in life. I was bred by my uncle, away from my poor parents, though I came back to them after his sudden death; and to poverty, and to this dependent life I am now leading. I am a servant, like you, John, but in another sphere—have to seek another place now; and Heaven knows if I shall procure one, now that that unlucky passage in my life is known. Oh, the coward to recall it! the coward!

MARY. But John whopped him, miss! that he did. He gave it him well, John did. (*Crying.*)

Miss P. You can't—you ought not to forego an attachment like that, John Howell. A more honest and true-hearted creature never breathed than Mary Barlow.

John. No, indeed.

Miss P. She has loved you since she was a little child. And you loved her once, and do now, John.

Mary. Oh, miss! you hare a hangel,—I hallways said you were a hangel.

Miss P. You are better than I am, my dear—much, much better than I am, John. The curse of my poverty has been that I have had to flatter and to dissemble, and hide the faults of those I wanted to help, and to smile when I was hurt, and laugh when I was sad, and to coax, and to tack, and to bide my time,—not with Mr. Milliken: he is all honour, and kindness, and simplicity. Whom did *he* ever injure, or what unkind word did *he* ever say? But do you think, with the jealousy of those two ladies over his house, I could have stayed here without being a hypocrite to both of them? Go, John. My good dear friend, John Howell, marry Mary. You'll be happier with her than with me. There! There!

[*They embrace.*

Mary. O—o—o! I think I'll go and hiron hout Miss Harabella's frocks now. [*Exit.*

Enter Milliken *with* Clarence—*who is explaining things to him.*

Clarence. Here they are, I give you my word of honour. Ask 'em, damn 'em!

Milliken. What is this I hear? You, John Howell, have dared to strike a gentleman under my roof! Your master's brother-in-law?

John. Yes, by Jove! and I'd do it again.

Milliken. Are you drunk or mad, Howell?

John. I'm as sober and as sensible as ever I was in my life, sir—I not only struck the master, but I struck the man, who's twice as big, only not quite as big a coward, I think.

Milliken. Hold your scurrilous tongue, sir! My good-nature ruins everybody about me. Make up your accounts. Pack your trunks—and never let me see your face again.

John. Very good, sir.

Milliken. I suppose, Miss Prior, you will also be disposed to—to follow Mr. Howell?

Miss P. To quit you, now you know what has passed? I never supposed it could be otherwise. I deceived you, Mr. Milliken,

as I kept a secret from you, and must pay the penalty. It is a relief to me: the sword has been hanging over me. I wish I had told your poor wife, as I was often minded to do.

MILLIKEN. Oh, you were minded to do it in Italy, were you?

MISS P. Captain Touchit knew it, sir, all along: and that my motives and, thank God, my life were honourable.

MILLIKEN. Oh, Touchit knew it, did he? and thought it honourable—honourable? Ha! ha! to marry a footman—and keep a public-house? I—I beg your pardon, John Howell—I mean nothing against you, you know. You're an honourable man enough, except that you have been damned insolent to my brother-in-law.

JOHN. Oh, Heaven!

[*Strikes his forehead, and walks away.*

MISS P. You mistake me, sir. What I wished to speak of was the fact which this gentleman has no doubt communicated to you—that I danced on the stage for three months.

MILLIKEN. Oh yes. Oh, damme, yes. I forgot. I wasn't thinking of that.

KICKLEBURY. You see she owns it.

MISS P. We were in the depths of poverty. Our furniture and lodging-house under execution—from which Captain Touchit, when he came to know of our difficulties, nobly afterwards released us. My father was in prison, and wanted shillings for medicine, and I—I went and danced on the stage.

MILLIKEN. Well?

MISS P. And I kept the secret afterwards; knowing that I could never hope as governess to obtain a place after having been a stage-dancer.

MILLIKEN. Of course you couldn't,—it's out of the question; and may I ask, are you going to resume that delightful profession when you enter the married state with Mr. Howell?

MISS P. Poor John! it is not I who am going to—that is, it's Mary, the schoolroom maid.

MILLIKEN. Eternal blazes! Have you turned Mormon, John Howell, and are you going to marry the whole house?

JOHN. I made a hass of myself about Miss Prior. I couldn't help her being l—l—ovely.

KICK. Gad, he proposed to her in my presence.

JOHN. What I proposed to her, Cornet Clarence Kicklebury, was my heart and my honour, and my best, and my everything—and you—you wanted to take advantage of her secret, and you offered her indignities, and you laid a cowardly hand on her—a cowardly hand!—and I struck you, and I'd do it again.

MILLIKEN. What? Is this true?

[*Turning round very fiercely to K.*

KICK. Gad! Well—I only——

MILLIKEN. You only what? You only insulted a lady under my roof—the friend and nurse of your dead sister—the guardian of my children. You only took advantage of a defenceless girl, and would have extorted your infernal pay out of her fear. You miserable sneak and coward!

KICK. Hallo! Come, come! I say I won't stand this sort of chaff. Dammy, I'll send a friend to you!

MILLIKEN. Go out of that window, sir! March! or I will tell my servant, John Howell, to kick you out, you wretched little scamp! Tell that big brute,—what's-his-name?—Lady Kicklebury's man, to pack this young man's portmanteau and bear's-grease pots; and if ever you enter these doors again, Clarence Kicklebury, by the Heaven that made me!—by your sister who is dead!—I will cane your life out of your bones. Angel in heaven! Shade of my Arabella—to think that your brother in your house should be found to insult the guardian of your children!

JOHN. By jingo, you're a good-plucked one! I knew he was, miss,—I told you he was.

[*Exit, shaking hands with his master and with Miss P., and dancing for joy. Exit Clarence, scared, out of window.*

JOHN (*without*). Bulkeley! pack up the Capting's luggage!

MILLIKEN. How can I ask your pardon, Miss Prior? In my wife's name I ask it—in the name of that angel whose dying-bed you watched and soothed—of the innocent children whom you have faithfully tended since.

MISS P. Ah, sir! it is granted when you speak so to me.

MILLIKEN. Eh, eh—d—don't call me sir!

MISS P. It is for me to ask pardon for hiding what you know now: but if I had told you—you—you never would have taken me into your house—your wife never would.

MILLIKEN. No, no. (*Weeping.*)

MISS P. My dear kind Captain Touchit knows it all. It was by his counsel I acted. He it was who relieved our distress. Ask him whether my conduct was not honourable—ask him whether my life was not devoted to my parents—ask him when—when I am gone.

MILLIKEN. When you are gone, Julia! Why are you going? Why should you go, my love—that is—why need you go, in the devil's name?

MISS P. Because, when your mother—when your mother-in-law

come to hear that your children's governess has been a dancer on the stage, they will send me away, and you will not have the power to resist them. They ought to send me away, sir; but I have acted honestly by the children and their poor mother, and you'll think of me kindly when—I—am—gone?

MILLIKEN. Julia, my dearest—dear—noble—dar——the devil! here's old Kicklebury.

Enter LADY K., Children, *and* CLARENCE.

LADY K. So, Miss Prior! this is what I hear, is it? A dancer in my house! a serpent in my bosom—poisoning—yes, poisoning those blessed children! occasioning quarrels between my own son and my dearest son-in-law; flirting with the footman! When do you intend to leave, madam, the house which you have po—poll—luted?

MISS P. I need no hard language, Lady Kicklebury: and I will reply to none. I have signified to Mr. Milliken my wish to leave his house.

MILLIKEN. Not, not, if you will stay. (*To Miss P.*)

LADY K. Stay, Horace! she shall *never* stay as governess in this house!

MILLIKEN. Julia! will you stay as mistress? You have known me for a year alone—before, not so well, when the house had a mistress that is gone. You know what my temper is, and that my tastes are simple, and my heart not unkind. I have watched you, and have never seen you out of temper, though you have been tried. I have long thought you good and beautiful, but I never thought to ask the question which I put to you now:—come in, sir! (*to Clarence at door*):—now that you have been persecuted by those who ought to have upheld you, and insulted by those who owed you gratitude and respect. I am tired of their domination, and as weary of a man's cowardly impertinence (*to Clarence*) as of a woman's jealous tyranny. They have made what was my Arabella's home miserable by their oppression and their quarrels. Julia! my wife's friend, my children's friend! be mine, and make me happy! Don't leave me, Julia! say you won't—say you won't—dearest—dearest girl!

MISS P. I won't—leave—you.

GEORGE (*without*). Oh, I say! Arabella, look here: here's papa a-kissing Miss Prior!

LADY K. Horace—Clarence my son! Shade of my Arabella! can you behold this horrible scene, and not shudder in heaven? Bulkeley! Clarence! go for a doctor—go to Doctor Straightwaist

at the Asylum—Horace Milliken, who has married the descendant of the Kickleburys of the Conqueror, marry a dancing-girl off the stage! Horace Milliken! do you wish to see me die in convulsions at your feet? I writhe there, I grovel there. Look! look at me on my knees! your own mother-in-law! drive away this fiend!

MILLIKEN. Hem! I ought to thank you, Lady Kicklebury, for it is you that have given her to me.

LADY K. He won't listen! he turns away and kisses her horrible hand. This will never do. Help me up, Clarence; I must go and fetch his mother. Ah, ah! there she is, there she is!

[*Lady K. rushes out, as the top of a barouche, with Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington and Coachman, is seen over the gate.*

MRS. B. What is this I hear, my son, my son? You are going to marry a—a stage-dancer? you are driving me mad, Horace!

MILLIKEN. Give me my second chance, mother, to be happy. You have had yourself two chances.

MRS. B. Speak to him, Mr. Bonnington.

[*Bonnington makes dumb show.*

LADY K. Implore him, Mr. Bonnington.

MRS. B. Pray, pray for him, Mr. Bonnington, my love—my lost abandoned boy!

LADY K. Oh, my poor dear Mrs. Bonnington!

MRS. B. Oh, my poor dear Lady Kicklebury!

[*They embrace each other.*

LADY K. I have been down on my knees to him, dearest Mrs. Bonnington.

MRS. B. Let us both—both go down on our knees—I *will* (*to her husband*). Edward, I will! (*Both ladies on their knees. Bonnington with outstretched hands behind them.*) Look, unhappy boy! look, Horace! two mothers on their wretched knees before you, imploring you to send away this monster! Speak to him, Mr. Bonnington. Edward! use authority with him, if he will not listen to his mother——

LADY K. To his mothers!

Enter TOUCHIT.

TOUCHIT. What is this comedy going on, ladies and gentlemen? The ladies on their elderly knees—Miss Prior with her hair down her back. Is it tragedy or comedy—is it a rehearsal for a charade, or are we acting for Horace's birthday? or, oh!—I beg your Reverence's pardon—you were perhaps going to a professional duty?

MRS. B. It's *we* who are praying this child, Touchit. This

child, with whom you used to come home from Westminster when you were boys. You have influence with him; he listens to you. Entreat him to pause in his madness.

TOUCHIT. What madness?

MRS. B. That—that woman—that serpent yonder—that—that dancing-woman, whom you introduced to Arabella Milliken,—ah! and I rue the day:—Horace is going to mum—mum—marry her!

TOUCHIT. Well! I always thought he would. Ever since I saw him and her playing at whist together, when I came down here a month ago, I thought he would do it.

MRS. B. Oh, it's the whist, the whist! Why did I ever play at whist, Edward? My poor Mr. Milliken used to like his rubber.

TOUCHIT. Since he has been a widower——

LADY K. A widower of that angel! [*Points to picture.*

TOUCHIT. Pooh, pooh, angel! You two ladies have never given the poor fellow any peace. You were always quarrelling over him. You took possession of his house, bullied his servants, spoiled his children; you did, Lady Kicklebury.

LADY K. Sir, you are a rude, low, presuming, vulgar man. Clarence! beat this rude man!

TOUCHIT. From what I have heard of your amiable son, he is not in the warlike line, I think. My dear Julia, I am delighted with all my heart that my old friend should have found a woman of sense, good conduct, good temper—a woman who has had many trials, and borne them with great patience—to take charge of him and make him happy. Horace, give me your hand! I knew Miss Prior in great poverty. I am sure she will bear as nobly her present good fortune; for good fortune it is to any woman to become the wife of such a loyal, honest, kindly gentleman as you are!

Enter JOHN.

JOHN. If you please, my Lady—if you please, sir—Bulkeley——

LADY K. What of Bulkeley, sir?

JOHN. He has packed his things, and Cornet Kicklebury's things, my Lady.

MILLIKEN. Let the fellow go.

JOHN. He won't go, sir, till my Lady have paid him his book and wages. Here's the book, sir!

LADY K. Insolence! quit my presence! And I, Mr. Milliken, will quit a house——

JOHN. Shall I call your Ladyship a carriage?

LADY K. Where I have met with rudeness, cruelty, and fiendish (*to Miss P., who smiles and curtsies*)—yes, fiendish ingratitude.

I will go, I say, as soon as I have made arrangements for taking other lodgings. You cannot expect a lady of fashion to turn out like a servant.

JOHN. Hire the "Star and Garter" for her, sir. Send down to the "Castle"; anything to get rid of her. I'll tell her maid to pack her traps. Pinhorn! [*Beckons maid and gives orders.*

TOUCHIT. You had better go at once, my dear Lady Kicklebury.

LADY K. Sir!

TOUCHIT. *The other mother-in-law is coming!* I met her on the road with all her family. He! he! he! (*Screams.*)

Enter MRS. PRIOR *and* Children.

MRS. P. My Lady; I hope your Ladyship is quite well! Dear kind Mrs. Bonnington! I came to pay my duty to you, ma'am. This is Charlotte, my Lady—the great girl whom your Ladyship so kindly promised the gown for; and this is my little girl, Mrs. Bonnington, ma'am, please; and this is my Bluecoat boy. Go and speak to dear kind Mr. Milliken—our best friend and protector—the son and son-in-law of these dear ladies. Look, sir! He has brought his copy to show you. (*Boy shows copy.*) Ain't it creditable to a boy of his age, Captain Touchit? And my best and most grateful services to you, sir. Julia, Julia, my dear, where's your cap and spectacles, you stupid thing? You've let your hair drop down. What! what!—— (*Begins to be puzzled.*)

MRS. B. Is this collusion, madam?

MRS. P. Collusion, dear Mrs. Bonnington!

LADY K. Or insolence, Mrs. Prior?

MRS. P. Insolence, your Ladyship! What—what is it? what has happened? What's Julia's hair down for? Ah! you've not sent the poor girl away? the poor poor child, and the poor poor children!

TOUCHIT. That dancing at the "Coburg" has come out, Mrs. Prior.

MRS. P. Not the darling's fault. It was to help her poor father in prison. It was I who forced her to do it. Oh! don't, don't, dear Lady Kicklebury, take the bread out of the mouths of these poor orphans! (*Crying.*)

MILLIKEN. Enough of this, Mrs. Prior: your daughter is not going away. Julia has promised to stay with me—and—never to leave me—as governess no longer, but as wife to me.

MRS. P. Is it—is it true, Julia?

MISS P. Yes, mamma.

MRS. P. Oh! oh! oh! (*Flings down her umbrella, kisses*

Julia, and running to Milliken), My son, my son! Come here, children. Come, Adolphus, Amelia, Charlotte—kiss your dear brother, children. What, my dears! How do you do, dears? (*To Milliken's children.*) Have they heard the news? And do you know that my daughter is going to be your mamma? There—there—go and play with your little uncles and aunts, that's good children! (*She motions off the Children, who retire towards garden. Her manner changes to one of great patronage and intense satisfaction.*) Most hot weather, your Ladyship, I'm sure. Mr. Bonnington, you must find it hot weather for preachin'! Lor'! there's that little wretch beatin' Adolphus! George, sir! have done, sir! (*Runs to separate them.*) How ever shall we make those children agree, Julia?

Miss P. They have been a little spoiled, and I think Mr. Milliken will send George and Arabella to school, mamma: will you not, Horace?

Mr. Milliken. I think school will be the very best thing for them.

Mrs. P. And (*Mrs. P. whispers, pointing to her own children*) the blue room, the green room, the rooms old Lady Kick has—plenty of room for us, my dear!

Miss P. No, mamma, I think it will be too large a party,—Mr. Milliken has often said that he would like to go abroad, and I hope that now he will be able to make his tour.

Mrs. P. Oh, then! we can live in the house, you know: what's the use of payin' lodgin', my dear?

Miss P. The house is going to be painted. You had best live in your own house, mamma; and if you want anything, Horace, Mr. Milliken, I am sure, will make it comfortable for you. He has had too many visitors of late, and will like a more quiet life, I think. Will you not?

Milliken. I shall like a life with *you*, Julia.

John. Cab, sir, for her Ladyship!

Lady K. This instant let me go! Call my people. Clarence, your arm! Bulkeley, Pinhorn! Mrs. Bonnington, I wish you good morning! Arabella, angel! (*looks at picture*) I leave you. I shall come to you ere long.

(*Exit, refusing Milliken's hand, passes up garden, with her servants following her. Mary and other servants of the house are collected together, whom Lady K. waves off. Bluecoat boy on wall eating plums. Page, as she goes, cries, Hurray, hurray! Bluecoat boy cries, Hurray! When Lady K. is gone, John advances.*

JOHN. I think I heard you say, sir, that it was your intention to go abroad?

MILLIKEN. Yes; oh yes! Are we going abroad, my Julia?

MISS P. To settle matters, to have the house painted, and clear. (*Pointing to Children, Mother, &c.*) Don't you think it is the best thing that we can do?

MILLIKEN. Surely, surely: we are going abroad. Howell, you will come with us of course, and with your experience you will make a capital courier. Won't Howell make a capital courier, Julia? Good honest fellow, John Howell. Beg your pardon for being so rude to you just now. But my temper is very hot, very!

JOHN (*laughing*). You are a Tartar, sir. Such a tyrant! isn't he, ma'am?

MISS P. Well, no; I don't think you have a very bad temper, Mr. Milliken, a—Horace.

JOHN. You must—take care of him—alone, Miss Prior—Julia—I mean Mrs. Milliken. Man and boy I've waited on him this fifteen year: with the exception of that trial at the printing-office, which—which I won't talk of *now*, madam. I never knew him angry; though many a time I have known him provoked. I never knew him say a hard word, though sometimes perhaps we've deserved it. Not often—such a good master as that is pretty sure of getting a good servant—that is, if a man has a heart in his bosom; and these things are found both in and out of livery. Yes, I have been a honest servant to him,—haven't I, Mr. Milliken?

MILLIKEN. Indeed, yes, John.

JOHN. And so has Mary Barlow. Mary, my dear! (*Mary comes forward.*) Will you allow me to introduce you, sir, to the futur' Mrs. Howell?—if Mr. Bonnington does *your* little business for you, as I daresay (*turning to Mr. B.*), hold gov'nor, you will!—Make it up with your poor son, Mrs. Bonnington, ma'am. You have took a second 'elpmate, why shouldn't Master Horace? (*To Mrs. B.*) He—he wants somebody to help him, and take care of him, more than you do.

TOUCHIT. You never spoke a truer word in your life, Howell.

JOHN. It's my general 'abit, Capting, to indulge in them sort of statements. A true friend I have been to my master, and a true friend I'll remain when he's my master no more.

MILLIKEN. Why, John, you are not going to leave me?

JOHN. It's best, sir, I should go. I—I'm not fit to be a servant in this house any longer. I wish to sit in my own little home, with my own little wife by my side. Poor dear! you've no conversation, Mary, but you're a good little soul. We've saved a hundred pound apiece, and if we want more, I know who won't

grudge it us, a good feller—a good master—for whom I've saved many a hundred pound myself, and will take the "Milliken Arms" at old Pigeoncot—and once a year or so, at this hanniversary, we will pay our respects to you, sir, and madam. Perhaps we will bring some children with us, perhaps we will find some more in this villa. Bless 'em beforehand! Good-bye, sir, and madam—come away, Mary! [*Going.*

Mrs. P. (*entering with clothes, &c.*) She has not left a single thing in her room. Amelia, come here! this cloak will do capital for you, and this—this garment is the very thing for Adolphus. Oh, John! eh, Howell! will you please to see that my children have something to eat, immediately! The Milliken children, I suppose, have dined already?

John. Yes, ma'am: certainly, ma'am.

Mrs. P. I see he is inclined to be civil to me *now!*

Miss P. John Howell is about to leave us, mamma. He is engaged to Mary Barlow, and when we go away, he is going to set up housekeeping for himself. Good-bye, and thank you, John Howell (*gives her hand to John, but with great reserve of manner*). You have been a kind and true friend to us—if ever we can serve you, count upon us—may he not, Mr. Milliken?

Milliken. Always, always.

Miss P. But you will still wait upon us—upon Mr. Milliken, for a day or two, won't you, John? until we—until Mr. Milliken has found some one to replace you. He will never find any one more honest than you, and good kind little Mary. Thank you, Mary, for your goodness to the poor governess.

Mary. Oh, miss! oh, mum!

[*Miss P. kisses Mary patronisingly.*

Miss P. (*to John*). And after they have had some refreshment, get a cab for my brothers and sisters, if you please, John. Don't you think that will be best, my—my dear?

Milliken. Of course, of course, dear Julia!

Miss P. And, Captain Touchit, you will stay, I hope, and dine with Mr. Milliken? And, Mrs. Bonnington, if you will receive as a daughter one who has always had a sincere regard for you, I think you will aid in making your son happy, as I promise you with all my heart and all my life to endeavour to do.

[*Miss P. and M. go up to Mrs. Bonnington.*

Mrs. Bonnington. Well, there then, since it must be so, bless you, my children!

Touchit. Spoken like a sensible woman! And now, as I do not wish to interrupt this felicity, I will go and dine at the "Star and Garter."

Miss P. My dear Captain Touchit, not for worlds! Don't you know I mustn't be alone with Mr. Milliken until—until——?

Milliken. Until I am made the happiest man alive! And you will come down and see us often, Touchit, won't you? And we hope to see our friends here often. And we will have a little life and spirit and gaiety in the place. Oh, mother! oh, George! oh, Julia! what a comfort it is to me to think that I am released from the tyranny of that terrible mother-in-law!

Mrs. Prior. Come in to your teas, children. Come this moment, I say.

[*The Children pass, quarrelling, behind the characters, Mrs. Prior summoning them; John and Mary standing on each side of the dining-room door as the curtain falls.*

LOVEL THE WIDOWER

LOVEL THE WIDOWER

CHAPTER I

THE BACHELOR OF BEAK STREET

WHO shall be the hero of this tale? Not I who write it. I am but the Chorus of the Play. I make remarks on the conduct of the characters: I narrate their simple story. There is love and marriage in it: there is grief and disappointment: the scene is in the parlour, and the region beneath the parlour. No: it may be the parlour and kitchen, in this instance, are on the same level. There is no high life, unless, to be sure, you call a baronet's widow a lady in high life; and some ladies may be, while some certainly are not. I don't think there's a villain in the whole performance. There is an abominable selfish old woman, certainly; an old highway robber; an old sponger on other people's kindness; an old haunter of Bath and Cheltenham boarding-houses (about which how can I know anything, never having been in a boarding-house at Bath or Cheltenham in my life?); an old swindler of tradesmen, tyrant of servants, bully of the poor—who, to be sure, might do duty for a villain, but she considers herself as virtuous a woman as ever was born. The heroine is not faultless (ah! that will be a great relief to some folk, for many writers' good women are, you know, so *very* insipid). The principal personage you may very likely think to be no better than a muff. But is many a respectable man of our acquaintance much better? and do muffs know that they are what they are, or, knowing it, are they unhappy? Do girls decline to marry one if he is rich? do we refuse to dine with one? I listened to one at church last Sunday, with all the women crying and sobbing; and, oh, dear me! how finely he preached! Don't we give him great credit for wisdom and eloquence in the House of Commons? Don't we give him important commands in the army? Can you, or can you not, point out one who has been made a peer? Doesn't your wife call

one in the moment any of the children are ill? Don't we read his dear poems, or even novels? Yes; perhaps even this one is read and written by—Well! *Quid rides?* Do you mean that I am painting a portrait which hangs before me every morning in the looking-glass when I am shaving? *Après!* Do you suppose that I suppose that I have not infirmities like my neighbours? Am I weak? It is notorious to all my friends there is a certain dish I can't resist: no, not if I have already eaten twice too much at dinner. So, dear sir, or madam, have *you* your weakness—*your* irresistible dish of temptation? (or if you don't know it, your friends do). No, dear friend, the chances are that you and I are not people of the highest intellect, of the largest fortune, of the most ancient family, of the most consummate virtue, of the most faultless beauty in face and figure. We are no heroes nor angels; neither are we fiends from abodes unmentionable, black assassins, treacherous Iagos, familiar with stabbing and poison—murder our amusement, daggers our playthings, arsenic our daily bread, lies our conversation, and forgery our common handwriting. No, we are not monsters of crime, or angels walking the earth—at least I know *one* of us who isn't, as can be shown any day at home if the knife won't cut or the mutton comes up raw. But we are not altogether brutal and unkind, and a few folks like us. Our poetry is not as good as Alfred Tennyson's, but we can turn a couplet for Miss Fanny's album: our jokes are not always first-rate, but Mary and her mother smile very kindly when papa tells his story or makes his pun. We have many weaknesses, but we are not ruffians of crime. No more was my friend Lovel. On the contrary, he was as harmless and kindly a fellow as ever lived when I first knew him. At present, with his changed position, he is, perhaps, rather *fine* (and certainly I am not asked to his *best* dinner-parties as I used to be, where you hardly see a commoner—but stay! I am advancing matters). At the time when this story begins, I say, Lovel had his faults—which of us has not? He had buried his wife, having notoriously been henpecked by her. How many men and brethren are like him! He had a good fortune—I wish I had as much—though I daresay many people are ten times as rich. He was a good-looking fellow enough; though that depends, ladies, upon whether you like a fair man or a dark one. He had a country house, but it was only at Putney. In fact, he was in business in the City, and being an hospitable man, and having three or four spare bedrooms, some of his friends were always welcome at Shrublands, especially after Mrs. Lovel's death, who liked me pretty well at the period of her early marriage with my friend, but got to dislike me at last and to show me the cold shoulder. That is a joint

I never could like (though I have known fellows who persist in dining off it year after year, who cling hold of it, and refuse to be separated from it). I say, when Lovel's wife began to show me that she was tired of my company, I made myself scarce: used to pretend to be engaged when Fred faintly asked me to Shrublands; to accept his meek apologies, proposals to dine *en garçon* at Greenwich, the club, and so forth; and never visit upon him my wrath at his wife's indifference—for, after all, he had been my friend at many a pinch: he never stinted at "Hart's" or "Lovegrove's," and always made a point of having the wine I liked, never mind what the price was. As for his wife, there was, assuredly, no love lost between us—I thought her a lean, scraggy, lackadaisical, egotistical, consequential, insipid creature; and as for his mother-in-law, who stayed at Fred's as long and as often as her daughter would endure her, has any one who ever knew that notorious old Lady Baker at Bath, at Cheltenham, at Brighton,—wherever trumps and frumps were found together; wherever scandal was cackled; wherever fly-blown reputations were assembled, and dowagers with damaged titles trod over each other for the *pas*;—who, I say, ever had a good word for that old woman? What party was not bored where she appeared? What tradesman was not done with whom she dealt? I wish with all my heart I was about to narrate a story with a good mother-in-law for a character; but then, you know, my dear madam, all good women in novels are insipid. This woman certainly was not. She was not only not insipid, but exceedingly bad-tasted. She had a foul loud tongue, a stupid head, a bad temper, an immense pride and arrogance, an extravagant son, and very little money. Can I say much more of a woman than this? Aha! my good Lady Baker! I was a *mauvais sujet*, was I?—I was leading Fred into smoking, drinking, and low bachelor habits, was I? I, his old friend, who have borrowed money from him any time these twenty years, was not fit company for you and your precious daughter? Indeed! *I* paid the money I borrowed from him like a man; but did *you* ever pay him, I should like to know? When Mrs. Lovel was in the first column of the *Times*, *then* Fred and I used to go off to Greenwich and Blackwall, as I said; then his kind old heart was allowed to feel for his friend; *then* we could have the other bottle of claret without the appearance of Bedford and the coffee, which in Mrs. L.'s time used to be sent in to us before we could ring for a second bottle, although she and Lady Baker had had three glasses each out of the first. Three full glasses each, I give you my word! No, madam, it was your turn to bully me once—now it is mine and I use it. No, you old catamaran, though you pretend you never read novels, some of

your confounded good-natured friends will let you know of *this* one. Here you are, do you hear? Here you shall be shown up. And so I intend to show up *other* women and *other* men who have offended me. Is one to be subject to slights and scorn, and not have revenge? Kindnesses are easily forgotten; but injuries!—what worthy man does not keep *those* in mind?

Before entering upon the present narrative, may I take leave to inform a candid public that, though it is all true, there is not a word of truth in it; that though Lovel is alive and prosperous, and you very likely have met him, yet I defy you to point him out; that his wife (for he is Lovel the Widower no more) is not the lady you imagine her to be, when you say (as you will persist in doing), "Oh, that character is intended for Mrs. Thingamy, or was notoriously drawn from Lady So-and-So." No. You are utterly mistaken. Why, even the advertising puffers have almost given up that stale stratagem of announcing "REVELATIONS FROM HIGH LIFE.—The *beau monde* will be startled at recognising the portraits of some of its brilliant leaders in Miss Wiggins's forthcoming *roman de société*." Or, "We suspect a certain ducal house will be puzzled to guess how the pitiless author of 'Mayfair Mysteries' has become acquainted with (and exposed with a fearless hand) *certain family secrets* which were thought only to be known to a few of the very highest members of the aristocracy." No, I say; these silly baits to catch an unsuspecting public shall not be our arts. If you choose to occupy yourself with trying to ascertain if a certain cap fits one amongst ever so many thousand heads, you *may* possibly pop it on the right one: but the cap-maker will perish before he tells you; unless, of course, he has some private pique to avenge, or malice to wreak, upon some individual who can't by any possibility hit again;—*then*, indeed, he will come boldly forward and seize upon his victim—(a bishop, say, or a woman without coarse quarrelsome male relatives, will be best)—and clap on him, or her, such a cap, with such ears, that all the world shall laugh at the poor wretch, shuddering and blushing beetroot red, and whimpering deserved tears of rage and vexation at being made the common butt of society. Besides, I dine at Lovel's still; his company and cuisine are amongst the best in London. If they suspected I was taking them off, he and his wife would leave off inviting me. Would any man of a generous disposition lose such a valued friend for a joke, or be so foolish as to show him up in a story? All persons with a decent knowledge of the world will at once banish the thought, as not merely base, but absurd. I am invited to his house one day next week: *vous concevez* I can't mention the very day, for then he would find me out—and of course there would be no more cards

for his old friend. He would not like appearing, as it must be owned he does in this memoir, as a man of not very strong mind. He believes himself to be a most determined, resolute person. He is quick in speech, wears a fierce beard, speaks with asperity to his servants (who liken him to a—to that before-named sable or ermine contrivance, in which ladies insert their hands in winter), and takes his wife to task so smartly, that I believe she believes he believes he is the master of the house. "Elizabeth, my love, he must mean A, or B, or D," I fancy I hear Lovel say; and she says, "Yes; oh! it is certainly D—his very image!" "D to a T," says Lovel (who is a neat wit). *She* may know that I mean to depict her husband in the above unpretending lines: but she will never let me know of her knowledge except by a little extra courtesy; except (may I make this pleasing exception?) by a few more invitations; except by a look of those unfathomable eyes (gracious goodness! to think she wore spectacles ever so long, and put a lid over them as it were!), into which, when you gaze sometimes, you may gaze so deep, and deep, and deep, that I defy you to plump half-way down into their mystery.

When I was a young man, I had lodgings in Beak Street, Regent Street (I no more have lived in Beak Street than in Belgrave Square: but I choose to say so, and no gentleman will be so rude as to contradict another)—I had lodgings, I say, in Beak Street, Regent Street. Mrs. Prior was the landlady's name. She had seen better days—landladies frequently have. Her husband—he could not be called the landlord, for Mrs. P. was manager of the place—had been, in happier times, captain or lieutenant in the militia; then of Diss, in Norfolk, of no profession; then of Norwich Castle, a prisoner for debt; then of Southampton Buildings, London, law-writer; then of the Bom-Retiro Caçadores, in the service of H.M. the Queen of Portugal, lieutenant and paymaster; then of Melina Place, Saint George's Fields, &c.—I forbear to give the particulars of an existence which a legal biographer has traced step by step, and which has more than once been the subject of judicial investigation by certain commissioners in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Well, Prior, at this time, swimming out of a hundred shipwrecks, had clambered on to a lighter, as it were, and was clerk to a coal-merchant, by the river-side. "You conceive, sir," he would say, "my employment is only temporary—the fortune of war, the fortune of war!" He smattered words in not a few foreign languages. His person was profusely scented with tobacco. Bearded individuals, padding the muddy hoof in the neighbouring Regent Street, would call sometimes of an evening, and ask for "the Captain." He was known at many neighbouring billiard-tables, and, I imagine, not

respected. You will not see enough of Captain Prior to be very weary of him and his coarse swagger, to be disgusted by his repeated requests for small money-loans, or to deplore his loss, which you will please to suppose has happened before the curtain of our present drama draws up. I think two people in the world were sorry for him: his wife, who still loved the memory of the handsome young man who had wooed and won her; his daughter Elizabeth, whom for the last few months of his life, and up to his fatal illness, he every evening conducted to what he called her "Academy." You are right. Elizabeth is the principal character in this story. When I knew her, a thin freckled girl of fifteen, with a lean frock, and hair of a reddish hue, she used to borrow my books, and play on the First Floor's piano, when he was from home—Slumley his name was. He was editor of the *Swell*, a newspaper then published; author of a great number of popular songs, a friend of several music-selling houses; and it was by Mr. Slumley's interest that Elizabeth was received as a pupil at what the family called "the Academy."

Captain Prior then used to conduct his girl to the Academy, but she often had to conduct him home again. Having to wait about the premises for two, or three, or five hours sometimes, whilst Elizabeth was doing her lessons, he would naturally desire to shelter himself from the cold at some neighbouring house of entertainment. Every Friday, a prize of a golden medal, nay, I believe sometimes of twenty-five silver medals, was awarded to Miss Bellenden and other young ladies for their good conduct and assiduity at this Academy. Miss Bellenden gave her gold medal to her mother, only keeping five shillings for herself, with which the poor child bought gloves, shoes, and her humble articles of millinery.

Once or twice the Captain succeeded in intercepting that piece of gold, and I daresay treated some of his whiskered friends, the clinking trampers of the Quadrant pavement. He was a free-handed fellow when he had anybody's money in his pocket. It was owing to differences regarding the settlement of accounts that he quarrelled with the coal-merchant, his very last employer. Bessy, after yielding once or twice to his importunity, and trying to believe his solemn promises of repayment, had strength of mind to refuse her father the pound which he would have taken. Her five shillings—her poor little slender pocket-money, the representative of her charities and kindnesses to the little brothers and sisters, of her little toilette ornaments, nay necessities; of those well-mended gloves, of those oft-darned stockings, of those poor boots, which had to walk many a weary mile after midnight; of those

little knicknacks, in the shape of brooch or bracelet, with which the poor child adorned her homely robe or sleeve—her poor five shillings, out of which Mary sometimes found a pair of shoes, or Tommy a flannel-jacket, and little Bill a coach and horse—this wretched sum, this mite, which Bessy administered amongst so many poor—I very much fear her father sometimes confiscated. I charged the child with the fact, and she could not deny me. I vowed a tremendous vow, that if ever I heard of her giving Prior money again, I would quit the lodgings, and never give those children lollipop, nor pegtop, nor sixpence; nor the pungent marmalade, nor the biting gingerbread-nut, nor the theatre characters, nor the paint-box to illuminate the same; nor the discarded clothes, which became smaller clothes upon the persons of little Tommy and little Bill, for whom Mrs. Prior, and Bessy, and the little maid, cut, clipped, altered, ironed, darned, mangled, with the greatest ingenuity. I say, considering what had passed between me and the Priors—considering those money transactions, and those clothes, and my kindness to the children—it was rather hard that my jam-pots were poached, and my brandy-bottles leaked. And then to frighten her brother with the story of the inexorable creditor—oh, Mrs. Prior!—oh, fie, Mrs. P.!

So Bessy went to her school in a shabby shawl, a faded bonnet, and a poor little lean dress flounced with the mud and dust of all weathers, whereas there were some other young ladies, fellow-pupils of hers, who laid out their gold medals to much greater advantage. Miss Delamere, with her eighteen shillings a week (calling them "*silver medals*" was only my wit you see), had twenty new bonnets, silk and satin dresses for all seasons, feathers in abundance, swansdown muffs and tippets, lovely pocket-handkerchiefs and trinkets, and many and many a half-crown mould of jelly, bottle of sherry, blanket, or what not, for a poor fellow-pupil in distress; and as for Miss Montanville, who had exactly the same sal—well, who had a scholarship of exactly the same value, viz., about fifty pounds yearly—she kept an elegant little cottage in the Regent's Park, a brougham with a horse all over brass harness, and a groom with a prodigious gold lace hat-band, who was treated with frightful contumely at the neighbouring cabstand; an aunt or a mother, I don't know which (I hope it was only an aunt), always comfortably dressed, and who looked after Montanville; and she herself had bracelets, brooches, and velvet pelisses of the very richest description. But then Miss Montanville was a good economist. *She* was never known to help a poor friend in distress, or give a fainting brother and sister a crust or a glass of wine. She allowed ten shillings a week to her father, whose name was Boskinson, said to

be a clerk to a chapel in Paddington; but she would never see him, —no, not when he was in hospital, where he was so ill; and though she certainly lent Miss Wilder thirteen pounds, she had Wilder arrested upon her promissory note for twenty-four, and sold up every stick of Wilder's furniture, so that the whole Academy cried shame! Well, an accident occurred to Miss Montanville, for which those may be sorry who choose. On the evening of the 26th of December, eighteen hundred and something, when the conductors of the Academy were giving their grand Annual Christmas Pant— I should say examination of the Academy pupils before their numerous friends—Montanville, who happened to be present, not in her brougham this time, but in an aërial chariot of splendour drawn by doves, fell off a rainbow, and through the roof of the Revolving Shrine of the Amaranthine Queen, thereby very nearly damaging Bellenden, who was occupying the shrine attired in a light-blue spangled dress, waving a wand, and uttering some idiotic verses composed for her by the Professor of Literature attached to the Academy. As for Montanville, let her go shrieking down that trap-door, break her leg, be taken home, and never more be character of ours. She never could speak. Her voice was as hoarse as a fishwoman's. Can that immense stout old box-keeper at the —— Theatre, who limps up to ladies on the first tier, and offers that horrible footstool, which everybody stumbles over, and makes a clumsy curtsey, and looks so knowing and hard, as if she recognised an acquaintance in the splendid lady who enters the box—can that old female be the once brilliant Emily Montanville? I am told there are *no* lady box-keepers in the English theatres. This, I submit, is a proof of my consummate care and artifice in rescuing from a prurient curiosity the individual personages from whom the characters of the present story are taken. Montanville is *not* a box-opener. She *may*, under another name, keep a trinket-shop in the Burlington Arcade, for what you know: but this secret no torture shall induce me to divulge. Life has its rises and its downfalls, and you have had yours, you hobbling old creature. Montanville, indeed! Go thy ways! Here is a shilling for thee. (Thank you, sir.) Take away that confounded footstool, and never let us see thee more!

Now the fairy Amarantha was like a certain dear young lady of whom we have read in early youth. Up to twelve o'clock, attired in sparkling raiment, she leads the dance with the prince (Gradini, known as Grady in his days of banishment at the T. R. Dublin). At supper, she takes her place by the prince's royal father (who is alive now, and still reigns occasionally, so that we will not mention his revered name). She makes believe to drink

from the gilded pasteboard, and to eat of the mighty pudding. She smiles as the good old irascible monarch knocks the prime minister and the cooks about: she blazes in splendour: she beams with a thousand jewels, in comparison with which the Koh-i-noor is a wretched lustreless little pebble: she disappears in a chariot, such as a Lord Mayor never rode in:—and at midnight, who is that young woman tripping homeward through the wet streets in a battered bonnet, a cotton shawl, and a lean frock fringed with the dreary winter flounces?

Our Cinderella is up early in the morning: she does no little portion of the house-work: she dresses her sisters and brothers: she prepares papa's breakfast. On days when she has not to go to morning lessons at her Academy, she helps with the dinner. Heaven help us! She has often brought mine when I have dined at home, and owns to having made that famous mutton-broth when I had a cold. Foreigners come to the house—professional gentlemen—to see Slumley on the first floor: exiled captains of Spain and Portugal, companions of the warrior her father. It is surprising how she has learned their accents, and has picked up French, and Italian too. And she played the piano in Mr. Slumley's room sometimes, as I have said; but refrained from that presently, and from visiting him altogether. I suspect he was not a man of principle. His paper used to make direful attacks upon individual reputations; and you would find theatre and opera people most curiously praised and assaulted in the *Swell*. I recollect meeting him, several years after, in the lobby of the Opera, in a very noisy frame of mind, when he heard a certain lady's carriage called, and cried out with exceeding strong language, which need not be accurately reported, "Look at that woman! Confound her! I made her, sir! Got her an engagement when the family was starving, sir! Did you see her, sir? She wouldn't even look at me!" Nor indeed was Mr. S. at that moment a very agreeable object to behold.

Then I remembered that there had been some quarrel with this man, when we lodged in Beak Street together. If difficulty there was, it was solved *ambulando*. He quitted the lodgings, leaving an excellent and costly piano as security for a heavy bill which he owed to Mrs. Prior, and the instrument was presently fetched away by the music-sellers, its owners. But regarding Mr. S——'s valuable biography, let us speak very gently. You see it is "an insult to literature" to say that there are disreputable and dishonest persons who write in newspapers.

Nothing, dear friend, escapes your penetration: if a joke is made in your company, you are down upon it instanter, and your smile rewards the wag who amuses you: so you knew at once,

whilst I was talking of Elizabeth and her Academy, that a theatre was meant, where the poor child danced for a guinea or five-and-twenty shillings per week. Nay, she must have had not a little skill and merit to advance to the quarter of a hundred; for she was not pretty at this time, only a rough tawny-haired filly of a girl, with great eyes. Dolphin, the manager, did not think much of her, and she passed before him in his regiment of Sea-nymphs, or Bayadères, or Fairies, or Mazurka maidens (with their fluttering lances and little scarlet slyboots!) scarcely more noticed than Private Jones standing under arms in his company when his Royal Highness the Field-Marshal gallops by. There were no dramatic triumphs for Miss Bellenden: no bouquets were flung at her feet: no cunning Mephistopheles—the emissary of some philandering Faustus outside—corrupted her duenna, or brought her caskets of diamonds. Had there been any such admirer for Bellenden, Dolphin would not only not have been shocked, but he would very likely have raised her salary. As it was, though himself, I fear, a person of loose morals, he respected better things. "That Bellenden's a good hhonest gurl," he said to the present writer: "works hard: gives her money to her family: father a shy old cove. Very good family I hear they are!" and he passes on to some other of the innumerable subjects which engage a manager.

Now, why should a poor lodging-house keeper make such a mighty secret of having a daughter earning an honest guinea by dancing at a theatre? Why persist in calling the theatre an Academy? Why did Mrs. Prior speak of it as such, to me who knew what the truth was, and to whom Elizabeth herself made no mystery of her calling?

There are actions and events in its life over which decent Poverty often chooses to cast a veil that is not unbecoming to wear. We can all, if we are minded, peer through this poor flimsy screen: often there is no shame behind it:—only empty platters, poor scraps, and other threadbare evidence of want and cold. And who is called on to show his rags to the public, and cry out his hunger in the street? At this time (her character has developed itself not so amiably since), Mrs. Prior was outwardly respectable; and yet, as I have said, my groceries were consumed with remarkable rapidity; my wine and brandy-bottles were all leaky, until they were excluded from air under a patent lock;—my Morel's raspberry-jam, of which I was passionately fond, if exposed on the table for a few hours, was always eaten by the cat, or that wonderful little wretch of a maid-of-all-work, so active, yet so patient, so kind, so dirty, so obliging. Was it *the maid* who took those groceries? I have seen the "Gazza Ladra" and

know that poor little maids are sometimes wrongfully accused; and besides, in my particular case, I own I don't care who the culprit was. At the year's end, a single man is not much poorer for this house-tax which he pays. One Sunday evening, being confined with a cold, and partaking of that mutton-broth which Elizabeth made so well, and which she brought me, I entreated her to bring from the cupboard, of which I gave her the key, a certain brandy-bottle. She saw my face when I looked at her: there was no mistaking its agony. There was scarce any brandy left: it had all leaked away: and it was Sunday, and no good brandy was to be bought that evening.

Elizabeth, I say, saw my grief. She put down the bottle, and she cried: she tried to prevent herself from doing so at first, but she fairly burst into tears.

"My dear,—dear child," says I, seizing her hand, "you don't suppose I fancy you——"

"No—no!" she says, drawing the large hand over her eyes. "No—no! but I saw it when you and Mr. Warrington last 'ad some. Oh! do have a patting lock!"

"A patent lock, my dear!" I remarked. "How odd that you, who have learned to pronounce Italian and French words so well, should make such strange slips in English! Your mother speaks well enough."

"She was born a lady. She was not sent to be a milliner's girl, as I was, and then among those noisy girls at that—oh! that *place!*" cries Bessy, in a sort of desperation, clenching her hand.

Here the bells of Saint Beak's began to ring quite cheerily for evening service. I heard "Elizabeth!" cried out from the lower regions by Mrs. Prior's cracked voice. And the maiden went her way to church, which she and her mother never missed of a Sunday; and I daresay I slept just as well without the brandy-and-water.

Slumley being gone, Mrs. Prior came to me rather wistfully one day, and wanted to know whether I would object to Madame Bentivoglio, the opera-singer, having the first floor? This was too much, indeed! How was my work to go on with that woman practising all day and roaring underneath me? But, after sending away so good a customer, I could not refuse to lend the Priors a little more money; and Prior insisted upon treating me to a new stamp, and making out a new and handsome bill for an amount nearly twice as great as the last: which he had no doubt under Heaven, and which he pledged his honour as an officer and a gentleman, that he would meet. Let me see: That was how many years ago?—Thirteen, fourteen, twenty? Never mind. My

fair Elizabeth, I think if you saw your poor old father's signature now, you would pay it. I came upon it lately in an old box I haven't opened these fifteen years, along with some letters, written —never mind by whom—and an old glove that I used to set an absurd value by; and that emerald-green tabinet waistcoat which kind old Mrs. Macmanus gave me, and which I wore at the L—d L—t—nt's ball, Ph–n–x Park, Dublin, once, when I danced with *her* there! Lord!—Lord! It would no more meet round my waist now than round Daniel Lambert's. How we outgrow things!

But as I never presented this united bill of £43 odd (the first portion of £23, &c. was advanced by me in order to pay an execution out of the house)—as I never expected to have it paid any more than I did to be Lord Mayor of London,—I say it was a little hard that Mrs. Prior should write off to her brother (she writes a capital letter), blessing Providence that had given him a noble income, promising him the benefit of her prayers, in order that he should long live to enjoy his large salary, and informing him that an obdurate creditor, who shall be nameless (meaning me), who had Captain Prior *in his power* (as if, being in possession of that dingy scrawl, I should have known what to do with it), who held Mr. Prior's acceptance for £43, 14s. 4d. due on the 3rd July (my bill), would infallibly bring their family to RUIN, unless a part of the money was paid up. When I went up to my old College, and called on Sargent, at Boniface Lodge, he treated me as civilly as if I had been an undergraduate; scarcely spoke to me in hall, where, of course, I dined at the Fellows' table; and only asked me to one of Mrs. Sargent's confounded tea-parties during the whole time of my stay. Now it was by this man's entreaty that I went to lodge at Prior's; he talked to me after dinner one day, he hummed, he ha'd, he blushed, he prated in his pompous way, about an unfortunate sister in London—fatal early marriage—husband, Captain Prior, Knight of the Swan with Two Necks of Portugal, most distinguished officer, but imprudent speculator—advantageous lodgings in the centre of London, quiet, though near the Clubs—if I was ill (I am a confirmed invalid), Mrs. Prior, his sister, would nurse me like a mother. So, in a word, I went to Prior's: I took the rooms: I was attracted by some children: Amelia Jane (that little dirty maid before mentioned) dragging a go-cart, containing a little dirty pair; another marching by them, carrying a fourth well-nigh as big as himself. These little folks, having threaded the mighty flood of Regent Street, debouched into the quiet creek of Beak Street, just as I happened to follow them. And the door at which the small caravan halted,—the very door I

was in search of,—was opened by Elizabeth, then only just emerging from childhood, with tawny hair falling into her solemn eyes.

The aspect of these little people, which would have deterred many, happened to attract me. I am a lonely man. I may have been ill-treated by some one once, but that is neither here nor there. If I had had children of my own, I think I should have been good to them. I thought Prior a dreadful vulgar wretch, and his wife a scheming, greedy little woman. But the children amused me: and I took the rooms, liking to hear overhead in the morning the patter of their little feet. The person I mean has several;—husband, judge in the West Indies. *Allons!* now you know how I came to live at Mrs. Prior's.

Though I am now a steady, a *confirmed* old bachelor (I shall call myself Mr. Batchelor, if you please, in this story; and there is some one far—far away who knows why I will NEVER take another title), I was a gay young fellow enough once. I was not above the pleasures of youth: in fact, I learned quadrilles on purpose to dance with her that long vacation when I went to read with my young friend, Lord Viscount Poldoody, at Dub—psha! Be still, thou foolish heart! Perhaps I misspent my time as an undergraduate. Perhaps I read too many novels, occupied myself too much with "elegant literature" (that used to be our phrase), and spoke too often at the Union, where I had a considerable reputation. But those fine words got me no College prizes: I missed my fellowship: was rather in disgrace with my relations afterwards, but had a small independence of my own, which I eked out by taking a few pupils for little-goes and the common degree. At length, a relation dying, and leaving me a further small income, I left the University, and came to reside in London.

Now in my third year at College, there came to Saint Boniface a young gentleman, who was one of the few gentlemen-pensioners of our society. His popularity speedily was great. A kindly and simple youth, he would have been liked, I daresay, even though he had been no richer than the rest of us; but this is certain, that flattery, worldliness, mammon worship, are vices as well known to young as to old boys; and a rich lad at school or college has his followers, tuft-hunters, led-captains, little courts, just as much as any elderly millionaire of Pall Mall, who gazes round his Club to see whom he shall take home to dinner, while humble trencher-men wait anxiously, thinking—Ah! will he take me this time? or will he ask that abominable sneak and toady Henchman again? Well—well! this is an old story about parasites and flatterers. My dear good sir, I am not for a moment going to say that *you* ever were one; and I daresay it was very base and mean of

us to like a man chiefly on account of his money. "I know"—Fred Lovel used to say—"I know fellows come to my rooms because I have a large allowance, and plenty of my poor old governor's wine, and give good dinners: I am not deceived; but, at least, it is pleasanter to come to me and have good dinners, and good wine, than to go to Jack Highson's dreary tea and turnout, or to Ned Roper's abominable Oxbridge port." And so I admit at once that Lovel's parties *were* more agreeable than most men's in the College. Perhaps the goodness of the fare, by pleasing the guests, made them more pleasant. A dinner in hall and a pewter plate is all very well, and I can say grace before it with all my heart; but a dinner with fish from London, game, and two or three nice little *entrées*, is better—and there was no better cook in the University than ours at Saint Boniface, and ah me! there were appetites then, and digestions which rendered the good dinner doubly good.

Between me and young Lovel a friendship sprang up, which, I trust, even the publication of this story will not diminish. There is a period, immediately after the taking of his bachelor's degree, when many a University-man finds himself embarrassed. The tradesmen rather rudely press for a settlement of their accounts. Those prints we ordered *calidi juventâ;* those shirt-studs and pins which the jewellers would persist in thrusting into our artless bosoms; those fine coats we would insist on having for our books, as well as ourselves; all these have to be paid for by the graduate. And my father, who was then alive, refusing to meet these demands, under the—I own—just plea, that my allowance had been ample, and that my half-sisters ought not to be mulcted of their slender portions in consequence of my extravagance, I should have been subject to very serious inconvenience—nay, possibly, to personal incarceration—had not Lovel, at the risk of rustication, rushed up to London to his mother (who then had *especial reasons* for being very gracious with her son), obtained a supply of money from her, and brought it to me at Mr. Shackell's horrible hotel, where I was lodged. He had tears in his kind eyes; he grasped my hand a hundred and hundred times as he flung the notes into my lap; and the recording tutor (Sargent was only tutor then), who was going to bring him up before the master for breach of discipline, dashed away a drop from his own lid, when, with a moving eloquence, I told what had happened, and blotted out the transaction with some particular old 1811 port, of which we freely partook in his private rooms that evening. By laborious instalments, I had the happiness to pay Lovel back. I took pupils, as I said; I engaged in literary pursuits: I became connected with a literary periodical, and, I am

ashamed to say, I imposed myself upon the public as a good classical scholar. I was not thought the less learned, when, my relative dying, I found myself in possession of a small independency ; and my "Translations from the Greek," my "Poems by Beta," and my articles in the paper of which I was part proprietor for several years, have had their little success in their day.

Indeed at Oxbridge, if I did not obtain University honours, at least I showed literary tastes. I got the prize essay one year at Boniface, and plead guilty to having written essays, poems, and a tragedy. My College friends had a joke at my expense (a very small joke serves to amuse those port-wine-bibbing fogies, and keeps them laughing for ever so long a time)—they are welcome, I say, to make merry at my charges—in respect of a certain bargain which I made on coming to London, and in which, had I been Moses Primrose purchasing green spectacles, I could scarcely have been more taken in. *My* Jenkinson was an old College acquaintance, whom I was idiot enough to imagine a respectable man : the fellow had a very smooth tongue, and sleek sanctified exterior. He was rather a popular preacher, and used to cry a good deal in the pulpit. He, and a queer wine-merchant and bill-discounter, Sherrick by name, had somehow got possession of that neat little literary paper, the *Museum*, which, perhaps, you remember ; and this eligible literary property my friend Honeyman, with his wheedling tongue, induced me to purchase. I bear no malice : the fellow is in India now, where I trust he pays his butcher and baker. He was in dreadful straits for money when he sold me the *Museum*. He began crying when I told him some short time afterwards that he was a swindler, and from behind his pocket-handkerchief sobbed a prayer that I should one day think better of him ; whereas my remarks to the same effect produced an exactly contrary impression upon his accomplice, Sherrick, who burst out laughing in my face, and said, "The more fool you!" Mr. Sherrick was right. He was a fool, without mistake, who had any money-dealing with him ; and poor Honeyman was right, too ; I don't think so badly of him as I did. A fellow so hardly pinched for money could not resist the temptation of extracting it from such a greenhorn. I daresay I gave myself airs as editor of that confounded *Museum*, and proposed to educate the public taste, to diffuse morality and sound literature throughout the nation, and to pocket a liberal salary in return for my services. I daresay I printed my own sonnets, my own tragedy, my own verses (to a Being who shall be nameless, but whose conduct has caused a faithful heart to bleed not a little). I daresay I wrote satirical articles, in which I piqued myself upon the fineness of my wit, and criticisms, got up for the nonce out of encyclopædias

and biographical dictionaries; so that I would be actually astounded at my own knowledge. I daresay I made a gaby of myself to the world: pray, my good friend, hast thou never done likewise? If thou hast never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man.

I think it was my brilliant *confrère* on the first floor (he had pecuniary transactions with Sherrick, and visited two or three of her Majesty's metropolitan prisons at that gentleman's suit) who first showed me how grievously I had been cheated in the newspaper matter. Slumley wrote for a paper printed at our office. The same boy often brought proofs to both of us—a little bit of a puny bright-eyed chap, who looked scarce twelve years old, when he was sixteen; who in wit was a man, when in stature he was a child,—like many other children of the poor.

This little Dick Bedford used to sit many hours asleep on my landing-place or Slumley's, whilst we were preparing our invaluable compositions within our respective apartments. S—— was a good-natured reprobate, and gave the child of his meat and his drink. I used to like to help the little man from my breakfast, and see him enjoy the meal. As he sat, with his bag on his knees, his head sunk in sleep, his little highlows scarce reaching the floor, Dick made a touching little picture. The whole house was fond of him. The tipsy Captain nodded him a welcome as he swaggered downstairs, stock, and coat, and waistcoat in hand, to his worship's toilette in the back kitchen. The children and Dick were good friends; and Elizabeth patronised him, and talked with him now and again, in her grave way. You know Clancy the composer?—know him better, perhaps, under his name of Friedrich Donner? Donner used to write music to Slumley's words, or *vice versâ;* and would come now and again to Beak Street, where he and his poet would try their joint work at the piano. At the sound of that music, little Dick's eyes used to kindle. "Oh, it's prime!" said the young enthusiast. And I will say, that good-natured miscreant of a Slumley not only gave the child pence, but tickets for the play, concerts, and so forth. Dick had a neat little suit of clothes at home; his mother made him a very nice little waistcoat out of my undergraduate's gown, and he and she, a decent woman, when in their best raiment, looked respectable enough for any theatre-pit in England.

Amongst other places of public amusement which he attended, Mr. Dick frequented the Academy where Miss Bellenden danced, and whence poor Elizabeth Prior issued forth after midnight in her shabby frock. And once, the Captain, Elizabeth's father and protector, being unable to walk very accurately, and noisy and incoherent

in his speech, so that the attention of Messieurs of the police was directed towards him, Dick came up, placed Elizabeth and her father in a cab, paid the fare with his own money, and brought the whole party home in triumph, himself sitting on the box of the vehicle. I chanced to be coming home myself (from one of Mrs. Wateringham's elegant tea *soirées*, in Dorset Square), and reached my door just at the arrival of Dick and his caravan. "Here, cabby!" says Dick, handing out the fare, and looking with his brightest eyes. It is pleasanter to look at that beaming little face, than at the Captain yonder, reeling into his house, supported by his daughter. Dick cried, Elizabeth told me, when, a week afterwards, she wanted to pay him back his shilling; and she said he was a strange child, that he was.

I revert to my friend Lovel. I was coaching Lovel for his degree (which, between ourselves, I think he never would have attained), when he suddenly announced to me, from Weymouth, where he was passing the vacation, his intention to quit the University, and to travel abroad. "Events have happened, dear friend," he wrote, "which will make my mother's home miserable to me (I little knew when I went to town about your business, what caused her *wonderful complaisance* to me). She would have broken my heart, Charles" (my Christian name is Charles), "but its wounds have found a *consoler!*"

Now, in this little chapter, there are some little mysteries propounded, upon which, were I not above any such artifice, I might easily leave the reader to ponder for a month.

1. Why did Mrs. Prior, at the lodgings, persist in calling the theatre at which her daughter danced the Academy?

2. What were the special reasons why Mrs. Lovel should be very gracious with her son, and give him £150 as soon as he asked for the money?

3. Why was Fred Lovel's heart nearly broken? And—

4. Who was his consoler?

I answer these at once, and without the slightest attempt at delay or circumlocution. 1. Mrs. Prior, who had repeatedly received money from her brother, John Erasmus Sargent, D.D., Master of St. Boniface College, knew perfectly well that if the Master (whom she already pestered out of his life) heard that she had sent a niece of his on the stage, he would never give her another shilling.

2. The reason why Emma, widow of the late Adolphus Loeffel, of Whitechapel Road, sugar-baker, was so particularly gracious to her son, Adolphus Frederick Lovel, Esquire, of Saint Boniface College, Oxbridge, and principal partner in the house of Loeffel

aforesaid, an infant, was that she, Emma, was about to contract a second marriage with the Reverend Samuel Bonnington.

3. Fred Lovel's heart was so very much broken by this intelligence, that he gave himself airs of Hamlet, dressed in black, wore his long fair hair over his eyes, and exhibited a hundred signs of grief and desperation; until—

4. Louisa (widow of the late Sir Popham Baker, of Bakerstown, county Kilkenny, Baronet) induced Mr. Lovel to take a trip on the Rhine with her and Cecilia, fourth and only unmarried daughter of the aforesaid Sir Popham Baker, deceased.

My opinion of Cecilia I have candidly given in a previous page. I adhere to that opinion. I shall not repeat it. The subject is disagreeable to me, as the woman herself was in life. What Fred found in her to admire I cannot tell: lucky for us all that tastes, men, women, vary. You will never see her alive in this history That is her picture, painted by the late Mr. Gandish. She stands fingering that harp with which she has often driven me half mad with her "Tara's Halls" and her "Poor Marianne." She used to bully Fred so, and be so rude to his guests, that, in order to pacify her, he would meanly say, "Do, my love, let us have a little music!" and thrumpty—thrumpty, off would go her gloves, and "Tara's Halls" would begin. "The harp that *once*," indeed! the accursed catgut scarce knew any other music, and "once" was a hundred times at least in *my* hearing. Then came the period when I was treated to the cold joint which I have mentioned; and, not liking it, I gave up going to Shrublands.

So, too, did my Lady Baker, but not of *her own free will*, mind you. *She* did not quit the premises because her reception was too cold, but because the house was made a great deal too hot for her. I remember Fred coming to me in high spirits, and describing to me, with no little humour, a great battle between Cecilia and Lady Baker, and her Ladyship's defeat and flight. She fled, however, only as far as Putney village, where she formed again, as it were, and fortified herself in a lodging. Next day she made a desperate but feeble attack, presenting herself at Shrublands lodge-gate, and threatening that she and sorrow would sit down before it; and that all the world should know how a daughter treated her mother. But the gate was locked, and Barnet, the gardener, appeared behind it, saying, "Since you *are* come, my Lady, perhaps you will pay my missis the four-and-twenty shillings you borrowed of her." And he grinned at her through the bars, until she fled before him, cowering. Lovel paid the little forgotten account; the best four-and-twenty shillings he had ever laid out, he said.

Eight years passed away; during the last four of which I

scarce saw my old friend, except at clubs and taverns, where we met privily, and renewed, not old warmth and hilarity, but old kindness. One winter he took his family abroad; Cecilia's health was delicate, Lovel told me, and the doctor had advised that she should spend a winter in the South. He did not stay with them: he had pressing affairs at home; he had embarked in many businesses besides the paternal sugar-bakery; was concerned in companies, a director of a joint-stock bank, a man in whose fire were many irons. A faithful governess was with the children; a faithful man and maid were in attendance on the invalid; and Lovel, adoring his wife, as he certainly did, yet supported her absence with great equanimity.

In the spring I was not a little scared to read amongst the deaths in the newspaper:—"At Naples, of scarlet fever, on the 25th ult., Cecilia, wife of Frederick Lovel, Esquire, and daughter of the late Sir Popham Baker, Baronet." I knew what my friend's grief would be. He had hurried abroad at the news of her illness; he did not reach Naples in time to receive the last words of his poor Cecilia.

Some months after the catastrophe, I had a note from Shrublands. Lovel wrote quite in the old affectionate tone. He begged his dear old friend to go to him, and console him in his solitude. Would I come to dinner that evening?

Of course I went off to him straightway. I found him in deep sables in the drawing-room with his children, and I confess I was not astonished to see my Lady Baker once more in that room.

"You seem surprised to see me here, Mr. Batchelor?" says her Ladyship, with that grace and good breeding which she generally exhibited; for if she accepted benefits, she took care to insult those from whom she received them.

"Indeed, no," said I, looking at Lovel, who piteously hung down his head. He had his little Cissy at his knee: he was sitting under the portrait of the defunct musician, whose harp, now muffled in leather, stood dimly in the corner of the room.

"I am here not at my own wish, but from a feeling of duty towards that—departed—angel!" says Lady Baker, pointing to the picture.

"I am sure when mamma was here, you were always quarrelling," says little Popham, with a scowl.

"This is the way those innocent children have been taught to regard me," cries grandmamma.

"Silence, Pop," says papa, "and don't be a rude boy."

"Isn't Pop a rude boy?" echoes Cissy.

"Silence, Pop," continues papa, "or you must go up to Miss Prior."

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH MISS PRIOR IS KEPT AT THE DOOR

OF course we all know who she was, the Miss Prior of Shrublands, whom papa and grandmamma called to the unruly children. Years had passed since I had shaken the Beak Street dust off my feet. The brass plate of "Prior" was removed from the once familiar door, and screwed, for what I can tell, on to the late reprobate owner's coffin. A little eruption of mushroom-formed brass knobs I saw on the door-post when I passed by it last week, and CAFÉ DES AMBASSADEURS was thereon inscribed, with three fly-blown blue teacups, a couple of coffee-pots of the well-known Britannia metal, and two freckled copies of the *Indépendance Belge* hanging over the window-blind. Were those their Excellencies the Ambassadors at the door, smoking cheroots? Pool and Billiards were written on their countenances, their hats, their elbows. They may have been ambassadors down on their luck, as the phrase is. They were in disgrace, no doubt, at the court of her imperial majesty Queen Fortune. Men as shabby have retrieved their disgraces ere now, washed their cloudy faces, strapped their dingy waistcoats with cordons, and stepped into fine carriages from quarters not a whit more reputable than the "Café des Ambassadeurs." If I lived in the Leicester Square neighbourhood, and kept a café, I would always treat foreigners with respect. They may be billiard-markers now, or doing a little shady police business; but why should they not afterwards be generals and great officers of state? Suppose that gentleman is at present a barber, with his tongs and stick of fixature for the moustaches, how do you know he has not his epaulettes and his *bâton de maréchal* in the same pouch? I see engraven on the second-floor bell, on my rooms, "Plugwell." Who can Plugwell be, whose feet now warm at the fire where I sat many a long evening? And this gentleman with the fur collar, the straggling beard, the frank and engaging leer, the somewhat husky voice, who is calling out on the door-step, "Step in, and 'ave it done. Your correct likeness, only one shilling"—is he an ambassador too? Ah, no: he is only the *chargé-d'affaires* of a photographer who lives upstairs: no doubt

where the little ones used to be. Bless me! Photography was an infant, and in the nursery, too, when *we* lived in Beak Street.

Shall I own that, for old times' sake, I went upstairs, and "'ad it done"—that correct likeness, price one shilling? Would Some One (I have said, I think, that the party in question is well married in a distant island) like to have the thing, I wonder, and be reminded of a man whom she knew in life's prime, with brown curly locks, as she looked on the effigy of this elderly gentleman, with a forehead as bare as a billiard-ball?

As I went up and down that darkling stair, the ghosts of the Prior children peeped out from the banisters; the little faces smiled in the twilight: it may be wounds (of the heart) throbbed and bled again,—oh, how freshly and keenly! How infernally I have suffered behind that door in that room—I mean that one where Plugwell now lives. Confound Plugwell! I wonder what that woman thinks of me as she sees me shaking my fist at the door? Do you think me mad, madam? I don't care if you do. Do you think when I spoke anon of the ghosts of Prior's children, I mean that any of them are dead? None are, that I know of. A great hulking Bluecoat-boy, with fluffy whiskers, spoke to me not long since, in an awful bass voice, and announced his name as "Gus Prior." And "How's Elizabeth?" he added, nodding his bullet head. Elizabeth, indeed, you great vulgar boy! Elizabeth,—and, by the way, how long we have been keeping her waiting!

You see, as I beheld her, a heap of memories struck upon me, and I could not help chattering; when of course—and you are perfectly right, only you might just as well have left the observation alone: for I knew quite well what you were going to say—when I had much better have held my tongue. Elizabeth means a history to me. She came to me at a critical period of my life. Bleeding and wounded from the conduct of that other individual (by her present name of Mrs. O'D—her present *O'D*-ous name—I say, I will never—never call her)—desperately wounded and miserable on my return from a neighbouring capital, I went back to my lodgings in Beak Street, and there there grew up a strange intimacy between me and my landlady's young daughter. I told her my story—indeed, I believe I told anybody who would listen. She seemed to compassionate me. She would come wistfully into my rooms, bringing me my gruel and things (I could scarcely bear to eat for a while after—after that affair to which I may have alluded before)—she used to come to me, and she used to pity me, and I used to tell her all, and to tell her over and over again. Days and days have I passed tearing my heart out in that second-floor room which answers to the name of Plugwell now. Afternoon after afternoon have I spent

there, and poured out my story of love and wrong to Elizabeth, shown her that waistcoat I told you of—that glove (her hand wasn't so very small either)—her letters, those two or three vacuous, meaningless letters, with "My dear sir—mamma hopes you will come to tea;" or, "If dear Mr. Batchelor *should* be riding in the Phœnix Park near the *Long Milestone*, about 2, my sister and I will be in the car, and," &c.; or, "Oh, you kind man! the tickets" (she called it *tickuts*—by heaven! she did) "were too welcome, and the *bouquays* too lovely" (this word, I saw, had been operated on with a penknife. I found no faults, not even in her spelling—then); or—never mind what more. But more of this *puling*, of this *humbug*, of this *bad spelling*, of this infernal jilting, swindling, heartless hypocrisy (all her mother's doing, I own; for until he *got his place*, my rival was not so well received as I was)—more of this RUBBISH, I say, I showed Elizabeth, and she pitied me!

She used to come to me day after day, and I used to talk to her. She used not to say much. Perhaps she did not listen; but I did not care for that. On—and on—and on I would go with my prate about my passion, my wrongs, and despair; and untiring as my complaints were, still more constant was my little hearer's compassion. Mamma's shrill voice would come to put an end to our conversation, and she would rise up with an "Oh, bother!" and go away: but the next day the good girl was sure to come to me again, when we would have another repetition of our tragedy.

I daresay you are beginning to suppose (what, after all, is a very common case, and certainly *no conjurer* is wanted to make the guess) that out of all this crying and sentimentality, which a soft-hearted old fool of a man poured out to a young girl—out of all this whimpering and pity, something which is said to be akin to pity might arise. But in this, my good madam, you are utterly wrong. Some people have the small-pox twice; *I do not*. In my case, if a heart is broke, it's broke: if a flower is withered, it's withered. If I choose to put my grief in a ridiculous light, why not? why do you suppose I am going to make a tragedy of such an old used-up, battered, stale, vulgar, trivial every-day subject as a jilt who plays with a man's passion, and laughs at him, and leaves him? Tragedy indeed! Oh, yes! poison—black-edged note-paper—Waterloo Bridge—one more unfortunate, and so forth! No: if she goes, let her go!—*si celeres quatit pennas*, I puff the what-d'ye-call-it away! But I'll have no *tragedy*, mind you.

Well, it must be confessed that a man desperately in love (as I fear I must own I then was, and a good deal cut up by Glorvina's conduct) is a most selfish being: whilst women are so soft and unselfish that they can forget or disguise their own sorrows for a

while, whilst they minister to a friend in affliction. I did not see, though I talked with her daily, on my return from that accursed Dublin, that my little Elizabeth was pale and *distraite*, and sad, and silent. She would sit quite dumb whilst I chattered, her hands between her knees, or draw one of them over her eyes. She would say, "Oh, yes! Poor fellow—poor fellow!" now and again, as giving a melancholy confirmation of my dismal stories; but mostly she remained quiet, her head drooping towards the ground, a hand to her chin, her feet to the fender.

I was one day harping on the usual string. I was telling Elizabeth how, after presents had been accepted, after letters had passed between us (if her scrawl could be called letters, if my impassioned song could be so construed), after everything but the actual word had passed our lips—I was telling Elizabeth how, on one accursed day, Glorvina's mother greeted me on my arrival in M–rr–n Square by saying, "Dear, dear Mr. Batchelor, we look on you quite as one of the family! Congratulate me—congratulate my child! Dear Tom has got his appointment as Recorder of Tobago; and it is to be a match between him and his cousin Glory."

"His cousin *What?*" I shriek with a maniac laugh.

"My poor Glorvina! Sure the children have been fond of each other ever since they could speak. I knew your kind heart would be the first to rejoice in their happiness."

And so, say I—ending the story—I, who thought myself loved, was left without a pang of pity: I, who could mention a hundred reasons why I thought Glorvina well disposed to me, was told she regarded me as an *uncle!* Were her letters such as nieces write? Who ever heard of an uncle walking round Merrion Square for hours of a rainy night, and looking up to a bedroom window, because his *niece*, forsooth, was behind it? I had set my whole heart on the cast, and this was the return I got for it. For months she cajoles me—her eyes follow me, her cursed smiles welcome and fascinate me, and at a moment, at the beck of another—she laughs at me and leaves me!

At this, my little pale Elizabeth, still hanging down, cries, "Oh, the villain! the villain!" and sobs so that you might have thought her little heart would break.

"Nay," said I, "my dear, Mr. O'Dowd is no villain. His uncle, Sir Hector, was as gallant an old officer as any in the service. His aunt was a Molloy, of Molloystown, and they are of excellent family, though, I believe, of embarrassed circumstances; and young Tom——"

"*Tom?*" cries Elizabeth, with a pale bewildered look. "*His*

name wasn't Tom, dear Mr. Batchelor; *his name was Woo-woo-illiqm!*" and the tears begin again.

Ah, my child! my child! my poor young creature! and you, too, have felt the infernal stroke. You, too, have passed the tossing nights of pain—have heard the dreary hours toll—have looked at the cheerless sunrise with your blank sleepless eyes—have woke out of dreams, mayhap, in which the beloved one was smiling on you, whispering love-words—oh! how sweet and fondly remembered! What!—your heart has been robbed, too, and your treasury is rifled and empty!—poor girl! And I looked in that sad face, and saw no grief there! You could do your little sweet endeavour to soothe my wounded heart, and I never saw yours was bleeding! Did you suffer more than I did, my poor little maid? I hope not. Are you so young, and is all the flower of life blighted for you? the cup without savour, the sun blotted or almost invisible over your head? The truth came on me all at once: I felt ashamed that my own selfish grief should have made me blind to hers.

"What!" said I, "my poor child? Was it . . .?" and I pointed with my finger *downwards*.

She nodded her poor head.

I knew it was the lodger who had taken the first floor shortly after Slumley's departure. He was an officer in the Bombay Army. He had had the lodgings for three months. He had sailed for India shortly before I returned home from Dublin.

Elizabeth is waiting all this time—shall she come in? No, not yet. I have still a little more to say about the Priors.

You understand that she was no longer Miss Prior of Beak Street, and that mansion, even at the time of which I write, had been long handed over to other tenants. The Captain dead, his widow with many tears pressed me to remain with her, and I did, never having been able to resist that kind of appeal. Her statements regarding her affairs were not strictly correct.—Are not women sometimes incorrect about money matters?—A landlord (not unjustly indignant) quickly handed over the mansion in Beak Street to other tenants. The Queen's taxes swooped down on poor Mrs. Prior's scanty furniture—on hers?—on mine likewise: on my neatly-bound College books, emblazoned with the effigy of Bonifacius, our patron, and of Bishop Budgeon, our founder; on my elegant Raphael Morghen prints, purchased in undergraduate days—(ye Powers! what *did* make us boys go tick for fifteen-guinea proofs of Raphael, Dying Stags, Duke of Wellington Banquets, and the like?); my harmonium, at which SOME ONE has warbled songs of my composition—(I mean the words, artfully describing my passion, my hopes, or my despair); on my rich set of Bohemian

glass, bought on the Zeil, Frankfort O. M.; on my picture of my father, the late Captain Batchelor (Hoppner), R.N.; in white ducks, and a telescope, pointing, of course, to a tempest, in the midst of which was a naval engagement; on my poor mother's miniature, by old Adam Buck, in pencil and pink, with no waist to speak of at all; my tea and cream pots (bullion), with a hundred such fond knicknacks as decorate the chamber of a lonely man. I found all these household treasures in possession of the myrmidons of the law, and had to pay the Priors' taxes with this hand, before I could be redintegrated in my own property. Mrs. Prior could only pay me back with a widow's tears and blessings (Prior having quitted a world where he had long ceased to be of use or ornament). The tears and blessings, I say, she offered me freely, and they were all very well. But why go on tampering with the tea-box, madam? Why put your finger—your finger?—your whole paw—in the jam-pot? And it is a horrible fact that the wine and spirit bottles were just as leaky after Prior's decease as they had been during his disreputable lifetime. One afternoon, having a sudden occasion to return to my lodgings, I found my wretched landlady in the very act of marauding sherry. She gave an hysterical laugh, and then burst into tears. She declared that since her poor Prior's death she hardly knew what she said or did. She may have been incoherent; she was; but she certainly spoke truth on *this* occasion.

I am speaking lightly—flippantly, if you please—about this old Mrs. Prior, with her hard eager smile, her wizened face, her frowning look, her cruel voice; and yet, goodness knows, I could, if I liked, be as serious as a sermoniser. Why, this woman had once red cheeks, and was well-looking enough, and told few lies, and stole no sherry, and felt the tender passions of the heart, and I daresay kissed the weak old beneficed clergyman her father very fondly and remorsefully that night when she took leave of him to skip round to the back garden-gate and run away with Mr. Prior. Maternal instinct she had, for she nursed her young as best she could from her lean breast, and went about hungrily, robbing and pilfering for them. On Sundays she furbished up that threadbare black silk gown and bonnet, ironed the collar, and clung desperately to church. She had a feeble pencil-drawing of the vicarage in Dorsetshire, and *silhouettes* of her father and mother, which were hung up in the lodgings wherever she went. She migrated much: wherever she went she fastened on the gown of the clergyman of the parish; spoke of her dear father the vicar, of her wealthy and gifted brother the Master of Boniface, with a reticence which implied that Doctor Sargent might do more for his poor sister and her

family, if he would. She plumed herself (oh! those poor moulting old plumes!) upon belonging to the clergy; had read a good deal of good sound old-fashioned theology in early life, and wrote a noble hand, in which she had been used to copy her father's sermons. She used to put cases of conscience, to present her humble duty to the Reverend Mr. Green, and ask explanation of such and such a passage of his admirable sermon, and bring the subject round so as to be reminded of certain quotations of Hooker, Beveridge, Jeremy Taylor. I think she had an old commonplace book with a score of these extracts, and she worked them in very amusingly and dexterously into her conversation. Green would be interested: perhaps pretty young Mrs. Green would call, secretly rather shocked at the coldness of old Doctor Brown, the rector, about Mrs. Prior. Between Green and Mrs. Prior money transactions would ensue: Mrs. Green's visits would cease: Mrs. Prior was an expensive woman to know. I remember Pye of Maudlin, just before he "went over," was perpetually in Mrs. Prior's back parlour with little books, pictures, medals, &c. &c.—you know. They called poor Jack a Jesuit at Oxbridge; but one year at Rome I met him (with a half-crown shaved out of his head, and a hat as big as Don Basilio's); and he said, "My dear Batchelor, do you know that person at your lodgings? I think she was an artful creature! She borrowed fourteen pounds of me, and I forget how much of—seven, I think—of Barfoot, of Corpus, just—just before we were received. And I believe she absolutely got another loan from Pummel, to be able to get out of the hands of us Jesuits. Are you going to hear the Cardinal? Do—do go and hear him—everybody does: it's the most fashionable thing in Rome." And from this I opine that there are slyboots in other communions besides that of Rome.

Now Mamma Prior had not been unaware of the love-passages between her daughter and the fugitive Bombay captain. Like Elizabeth, she called Captain Walkingham "villain" readily enough; but, if I know woman's nature in the least (and I don't), the old schemer had thrown her daughter only too frequently in the officer's way, had done no small portion of the flirting herself, had allowed poor Bessy to receive presents from Captain Walkingham, and had been the manager and directress of much of the mischief which ensued. You see, in this humble class of life, unprincipled mothers *will* coax and wheedle and cajole gentlemen whom they suppose to be eligible, in order to procure an establishment for their darling children! What the Prioress did was done from the best motives of course. "Never—never did the monster see Bessy without me, or one or two of her brothers and sisters, and Jack and dear Ellen are as sharp children as any in England!" protested the indignant

Mrs. Prior to me; "and if one of my boys had been grown up, Walkingham never would have dared to act as he did—the unprincipled wretch! My poor husband would have punished the villain as he deserved; but what could he do in his shattered state of health? Oh! you men,—you men, Mr. Batchelor! how *unprincipled* you are!"

"Why, my good Mrs. Prior," said I, "you let Elizabeth come to my room often enough."

"To have the conversation of her uncle's friend, of an educated man, of a man so much older than herself! Of course, dear sir! Would not a mother wish every advantage for her child? and whom could I trust, if not you, who have ever been such a friend to me and mine?" asks Mrs. Prior, wiping her dry eyes with the corner of her handkerchief, as she stands by my fire, my monthly bills in hand,—written in her neat old-fashioned writing, and calculated with that prodigal liberality which she always exercised in compiling the little accounts between us. "Why, bless me!" says my cousin, little Mrs. Skinner, coming to see me once when I was unwell, and examining one of the just mentioned documents,—"bless me! Charles, you consume more tea than all my family, though we are seven in the parlour, and as much sugar and butter,—well, it's no wonder you are bilious!"

"But then, my dear, I like my tea so *very* strong," said I; "and you take yours so uncommonly mild. I have remarked it at your parties."

"It's a shame that a man should be robbed so," cried Mrs. S.

"How kind it is of you to cry thieves, Flora!" I reply.

"It's my duty, Charles!" exclaims my cousin. "And I should like to know who that great, tall, gawky, red-haired girl in the passage is!"

Ah me! the name of the only woman who ever had possession of this heart was not Elizabeth; though I own I did think at one time that my little schemer of a landlady would not have objected if I had proposed to make Miss Prior Mrs. Batchelor. And it is not only the poor and needy who have this mania, but the rich too. In the very highest circles, as I am informed by the best authorities, this match-making goes on. Ah woman—woman!—ah wedded wife!—ah fond mother of fair daughters! how strange thy passion is to add to thy titles that of mother-in-law! I am told, when you have got the title, it is often but a bitterness and a disappointment. Very likely the son-in-law is rude to you, the coarse ungrateful brute! and very possibly the daughter rebels, the thankless serpent! And yet you will go on scheming: and having met only with disappointment from Louisa and her husband, you will try and get one for Jemima, and Maria, and down even to

little Toddles coming out of the nursery in her red shoes! When you see her with little Tommy, your neighbour's child, fighting over the same Noah's ark, or clambering on the same rocking-horse, I make no doubt, in your fond silly head, you are thinking, "Will those little people meet some twenty years hence?" And you give Tommy a very large piece of cake, and have a fine present for him on the Christmas tree—you know you do, though he is but a rude noisy child, and has already beaten Toddles, and taken her doll away from her, and made her cry. I remember, when I myself was suffering from the conduct of a young woman in—in a capital which is distinguished by a viceregal Court—and from *her* heartlessness, as well as that of her relative, who I once thought would be *my* mother-in-law—shrieking out to a friend who happened to be spouting some lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses":—"By George! Warrington, I have no doubt that when the young sirens set their green caps at the old Greek captain and his crew, waving and beckoning him with their white arms and glancing smiles, and wheedling him with their sweetest pipes—I make no doubt, sir, that *the mother sirens* were behind the rocks (with their dyed fronts and cheeks painted, so as to resist water), and calling out 'Now, Halcyone, my child, that air from the Pirata! Now, Glaukopis, dear, look well at that old gentleman at the helm! Bathykolpos, love, there's a young sailor on the maintop, who will tumble right down into your lap if you beckon him!' And so on —and so on." And I laughed a wild shriek of despair. For I, too, have been on the dangerous island, and come away thence, mad, furious, wanting a strait-waistcoat.

And so, when a white-armed siren, named Glorvina, was bedevilling *me* with her all too tempting ogling and singing, I did not see at the time, but *now* I know, that her artful mother was egging that artful child on.

How, when the Captain died, bailiffs and executions took possession of his premises, I have told in a previous page, nor do I care to enlarge much upon the odious theme. I think the bailiffs were on the premises before Prior's exit: but he did not know of their presence. If I had to buy them out, 'twas no great matter: only I say it *was* hard of Mrs. Prior to represent me in the character of Shylock to the Master of Boniface. Well—well! I suppose there are other gentlemen besides Mr. Charles Batchelor who have been misrepresented in this life. Sargent and I made up matters afterwards, and Miss Bessy was the cause of our coming together again. "Upon my word, my dear Batchelor," says he one Christmas, when I went up to the old College, "I did not know how much my—ahem!—my family was obliged to you!

My—ahem!—niece, Miss Prior, has informed me of various acts of—ahem!—generosity which you showed to my poor sister, and her still more wretched husband. You got my second—ahem!—nephew—pardon me if I forget his Christian name—into the what-d'you-call'em—Bluecoat School; you have been, on various occasions, of considerable pecuniary service to my sister's family. A man need not take high university honours to have a good—ahem!—heart; and, upon my word, Batchelor, I and my—ahem!—wife are sincerely obliged to you!"

"I tell you what, Master," said I, "there *is* a point upon which you ought really to be obliged to me, and in which I have been the means of putting money into your pocket too."

"I confess I fail to comprehend you," says the Master, with his grandest air.

"I have got you and Mrs. Sargent a very good governess for your children, at the very smallest remuneration," say I.

"Do you know the charges that unhappy sister of mine and her family have put me to already?" says the Master, turning as red as his hood.

"They have formed the frequent subject of your conversation," I replied. "You have had Bessy as a governess——"

"A nursery governess—she has learned Latin and a great deal more, since she has been in my house," cries the Master.

"A nursery governess at the wages of a housemaid," I continued, as bold as Corinthian brass.

"Does my niece, does my—ahem!—children's governess, complain of her treatment in my College?" cries the Master.

"My dear Master," I asked, "you don't suppose I would have listened to her complaints, or, at any rate, have repeated them, until now!"

"And why now, Batchelor, I should like to know?" says the Master, pacing up and down his study in a fume, under the portraits of Holy Bonifacius, Bishop Budgeon, and all the defunct bigwigs of the College. "And why now, Batchelor, I should like to know?" says he.

"Because—though after staying with you for three years, and having improved herself greatly, as every woman must in your society, my dear Master, Miss Prior is worth at least fifty guineas a year more than you give her—I would not have had her speak until she had found a better place."

"You mean to say she proposes to go away?"

"A wealthy friend of mine, who was a member of our College, by the way, wants a nursery governess, and I have recommended Miss Prior to him, at seventy guineas a year."

"And pray who's the member of my College who will give my niece seventy guineas?" asked the Master fiercely.

"You remember Lovel, the gentleman-pensioner?"

"The sugar-baking man—the man who took you out of ja——?"

"One good turn deserves another," say I hastily. "I have done as much for some of your family, Sargent!"

The red Master, who had been rustling up and down his study in his gown and bands, stopped in his walk as if I had struck him. He looked at me. He turned redder than ever. He drew his hand over his eyes. "Batchelor," says he, "I ask your pardon. It was I who forgot myself—may Heaven forgive me!—forgot how good you have been to my family, to my—ahem!—*humble* family, and—and how devoutly thankful I ought to be for the protection which they have found in you." His voice quite fell as he spoke: and of course any little wrath which I might have felt was disarmed before his contrition. We parted the best friends. He not only shook hands with me at the study-door, but he actually followed me to the hall-door, and shook hands at his lodge-porch, *sub Jove*, in the quadrangle. Huckles, the tutor (Highlow Huckles we used to call him in our time), and Botts (Trumperian professor), who happened to be passing through the court at the time, stood aghast as they witnessed the phenomenon.

"I say, Batchelor," asks Huckles, "have you been made a marquis by any chance?"

"Why a marquis, Huckles?" I ask.

"Sargent never comes to his lodge-door with any man under a marquis," says Huckles, in a low whisper.

"Or a pretty woman," says that Botts (he *will* have his joke). "Batchelor, my elderly Tiresias, are you turned into a lovely young lady *par hasard?*"

"Get along, you absurd Trumperian professor!" say I. But the circumstance was the talk not only in Compotation Room that evening over our wine, but of the whole College. And further events happened which made each man look at his neighbour with wonder. For that whole term Sargent did not ask our nobleman Lord Sackville (Lord Wigmore's son) to the lodge. (Lord W.'s father, you know, Duff, was baker to the College.) For that whole term he was rude but twice to Perks, the junior tutor, and then only in a very mild way; and what is more, he gave his niece a present of a gown, of his blessing, of a kiss, and a high character when she went away;—and promised to put one of her young brothers to school—which promise, I need not say, he faithfully kept: for he has good principles, Sargent has. He is rude:

he is ill bred: he is *bumptious* beyond almost any man I ever knew: he is spoiled not a little by prosperity;—but he is magnanimous: he can own that he has been in the wrong; and oh me! what a quantity of Greek he knows!

Although my late friend the Captain never seemed to do aught but spend the family money, his disreputable presence somehow acted for good in the household. "My dear husband kept our family together," Mrs. Prior said, shaking her lean head under her meagre widow's cap. "Heaven knows how I shall provide for these lambs now he is gone!" Indeed, it was not until after the death of that tipsy shepherd that the wolves of the law came down upon the lambs—myself included, who have passed the age of lambhood and mint sauce a long time. They came down upon our fold in Beak Street, I say, and ravished it. What was I to do? Could I leave that widow and children in their distress? I was not ignorant of misfortune, and knew how to succour the miserable. Nay, I think the little excitement attendant upon the seizure of my goods, &c., the insolent vulgarity of the low persons in possession—with one of whom I was very near coming to a personal encounter—and other incidents which occurred in the bereft household, served to rouse me, and dissipate some of the languor and misery under which I was suffering in consequence of Miss Mulligan's conduct to me. I know I took the late Captain to his final abode. My good friends the printers of the *Museum* took one of his boys into their counting-house. A blue coat and a pair of yellow stockings were procured for Augustus; and seeing the Master's children walking about in Boniface gardens with a glum-looking old wretch of a nurse, I bethought me of proposing to him to take his niece Miss Prior—and, Heaven be good to me! never said one word to her uncle about Miss Bellenden and the Academy. I daresay I drew a number of long bows about her. I managed about the bad grammar pretty well by lamenting that Elizabeth's poor mother had been forced to allow the girl to keep company with ill-educated people: and added, that she could not fail to mend her English in the house of one of the most distinguished scholars in Europe, and one of the best-bred women. I did say so, upon my word, looking that half-bred, stuck-up Mrs. Sargent gravely in the face; and I humbly trust, if that bouncer has been registered against me, the Recording Angel will be pleased to consider that the motive was good, though the statement was unjustifiable. But I don't think it was the compliment: I think it was the temptation of getting a governess for next to nothing that operated upon Madam Sargent. And so Bessy went to her aunt, partook of the bread of dependence, and drank of the cup of

humiliation, and ate the pie of humility, and brought up her odious little cousins to the best of her small power, and bowed the head of hypocrisy before the don her uncle, and the pompous little upstart her aunt. *She* the best-bred woman in England, indeed! She, the little vain skinflint!

Bessy's mother was not a little loth to part with the fifty pounds a year which the child brought home from the Academy; but her departure thence was inevitable. Some quarrel had taken place there, about which the girl did not care to talk. Some rudeness had been offered to Miss Bellenden, to which Miss Prior was determined not to submit: or was it that she wanted to go away from the scenes of her own misery, and to try and forget that Indian captain? Come, fellow-sufferer! Come, child of misfortune, come hither! Here is an old bachelor who will weep with thee tear for tear!

I protest here is Miss Prior coming into the room at last. A pale face, a tawny head of hair combed back, under a black cap: a pair of blue spectacles, as I live! a tight mourning dress, buttoned up to her white throat; a head hung meekly down: such is Miss Prior. She takes my hand when I offer it. She drops me a demure little curtsey, and answers my many questions with humble monosyllabic replies. She appeals constantly to Lady Baker for instruction, or for confirmation of her statements. What! have six years of slavery so changed the frank daring young girl whom I remember in Beak Street! She is taller and stouter than she was. She is awkward and high-shouldered, but surely she has a very fine figure.

"Will Miss Cissy and Master Popham have their teas here or in the schoolroom?" asks Bedford, the butler, of his master. Miss Prior looks appealingly to Lady Baker.

"In the sch——" Lady Baker is beginning.

"Here—here!" bawl out the children. "Much better fun down here: and you'll send us out some fruit and things from dinner, papa!" cries Cissy.

"It's time to dress for dinner," says her Ladyship.

"Has the first bell rung?" asks Lovel.

"Yes, the first bell has rung, and grandmamma must go, for it always takes her a precious long time to dress for dinner!" cries Pop. And indeed, on looking at Lady Baker, the connoisseur might perceive that her Ladyship was a highly composite person, whose charms required very much care and arrangement. There are some cracked old houses where the painters and plumbers and puttyers are always at work.

"Have the goodness to ring the bell!" she says, in a majestic

manner, to Miss Prior, though I think Lady Baker herself was nearest.

I sprang towards the bell myself, and my hand meets Elizabeth's there, who was obeying her Ladyship's summons, and who retreats, making me the demurest curtsey. At the summons, enter Bedford the butler (he was an old friend of mine too) and young Buttons, the page under that butler.

Lady Baker points to a heap of articles on a table, and says to Bedford: "If you please, Bedford, tell my man to give those things to Pincott, my maid, to be taken to my room."

"Shall not I take them up, dear Lady Baker?" says Miss Prior.

But Bedford, looking at his subordinate, says: "Thomas! tell Bulkeley, her Ladyship's man, to take her Ladyship's things, and give them to her Ladyship's maid." There was a tone of sarcasm, even of parody, in Monsieur Bedford's voice; but his manner was profoundly grave and respectful. Drawing up her person, and making a motion, I don't know whether of politeness or defiance, exit Lady Baker, followed by page, bearing bandboxes, shawls, paper parcels, parasols—I know not what. Dear Popham stands on his head as grandmamma leaves the room. "Don't be vulgar!" cries little Cissy (the dear child is always acting as a little Mentor to her brother). "I shall, if I like," says Pop; and he makes faces at her.

"You know your room, Batch?" asks the master of the house.

"Mr. Batchelor's old room—always has the blue room," says Bedford, looking very kindly at me.

"Give us," cried Lovel, "a bottle of that Sau——"

"——terne Mr. Batchelor used to like. Château Yquem. All right!" says Mr. Bedford. "How will you have the turbot done you brought down?—Dutch sauce?—Make lobster into salad? Mr. Bonnington likes lobster-salad," says Bedford. Pop is winding up the butler's back at this time. It is evident Mr. Bedford is a privileged person in the family. As he had entered it on my nomination several years ago, and had been ever since the faithful valet, butler, and major-domo of Lovel, Bedford and I were always good friends when we met.

"By the way, Bedford, why wasn't the barouche sent for me to the bridge?" cries Lovel. "I had to walk all the way home, with a bat and stumps for Pop, with the basket of fish, and that bandbox with my Lady's——"

"He—he!" grins Bedford.

"'He—he!' Confound you, why do you stand grinning there? Why didn't I have the carriage, I say?" bawls the master of the house.

"*You* know, sir," says Bedford. "*She* had the carriage." And he indicated the door through which Lady Baker had just retreated.

"Then why didn't I have the phaeton?" asks Bedford's master.

"Your ma and Mr. Bonnington had the phaeton."

"And why shouldn't they, pray? Mr. Bonnington is lame: I'm at my business all day. I should like to know why they *shouldn't* have the phaeton?" says Lovel, appealing to me. As we had been sitting talking together previous to Miss Prior's appearance, Lady Baker had said to Lovel, "Your mother and Mr. Bonnington are coming to dinner *of course*, Frederick?" and Lovel had said, "Of course they are," with a peevish bluster, whereof I now began to understand the meaning. The fact was, these two women were fighting for the possession of this child; but who was the Solomon to say which should have him? Not I. *Nenni.* I put my oar in no man's boat. Give me an easy life, my dear friends, and row me gently over.

"You had better go and dress," says Bedford sternly, looking at his master; "the first bell has rung this quarter of an hour. Will you have some '34?"

Lovel started up; he looked at the clock. "You are all ready, Batch, I see. I hope you are going to stay some time, ain't you?" And he disappeared to array himself in his sables and starch. I was thus alone with Miss Prior and her young charges, who resumed straightway their infantine gambols and quarrels.

"My dear Bessy!" I cry, holding out both hands, "I am heartily glad to——"

"Ne m'appelez que de mon nom paternel devant tout ce monde, s'il vous plaît, mon cher ami, mon bon protecteur!" she says, hastily, in very good French, folding her hands and making a curtsey.

"Oui, oui, oui! Parlez-vous Français? J'aime, tu aimes, il aime!" cries out dear Master Popham. "What are you talking about? Here's the phaeton!" and the young innocent dashes through the open window on to the lawn, whither he is followed by his sister, and where we see the carriage containing Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington rolling over the smooth walk.

Bessy advances towards me, and gives me readily enough now the hand she had refused anon.

"I never thought you would have refused it, Bessy," said I.

"Refuse it to the best friend I ever had!" she says, pressing my hand. "Ah, dear Mr. Batchelor, what an ungrateful wretch I should be, if I did!"

"Let me see your eyes. Why do you wear spectacles? You

BESSY'S SPECTACLES.

never wore them in Beak Street," I say. You see I was very fond of the child. She had wound herself around me in a thousand fond ways. Owing to a certain Person's conduct my heart may be a ruin—a Persepolis, sir—a perfect Tadmor. But what then? May not a traveller rest under its shattered columns? May not an Arab maid repose there till the morning dawns and the caravan passes on? Yes, my heart is a Palmyra, and once a Queen inhabited me (O Zenobia! Zenobia! to think thou should'st have been led away captive by an O'D—!). Now, I am alone, alone in the solitary wilderness. Nevertheless, if a stranger comes to me I have a spring for his weary feet, I will give him the shelter of my shade. Rest thy cheek awhile, young maiden, on my marble—then go thy ways and leave me.

This I thought, or something to this effect, as, in reply to my remark, "Let me see your eyes," Bessy took off her spectacles, and I took them up and looked at her. Why didn't I say to her, "My dear brave Elizabeth! as I look in your face, I see you have had an awful deal of suffering. Your eyes are inscrutably sad. We who are initiated, know the members of our Community of Sorrow. We have both been wrecked in different ships, and been cast on this shore. Let us go hand-in-hand, and find a cave and a shelter somewhere together!" I say, why didn't I say this to her? She would have come, I feel sure she would. We would have been semi-attached as it were. We would have locked up that room in either heart where the skeleton was, and said nothing about it, and pulled down the party wall and taken our mild tea in the garden. I live in Pump Court now. It would have been better than this dingy loneliness and a snuffy laundress who bullies me. But for Bessy? Well—well, perhaps better for her too.

I remember these thoughts rushing through my mind whilst I held the spectacles. What a number of other things too! I remember two canaries making a tremendous concert in their cage. I remember the voices of the two children quarrelling on the lawn, the sound of the carriage wheels grinding over the gravel; and then of a little old familiar cracked voice in my ear, with a "La, Mr. Batchelor; are *you* here?" And a sly face looks up at me from under an old bonnet.

"It is mamma," says Bessy.

"And I'm come to tea with Elizabeth and the dear children; and while you are at dinner, dear Mr. Batchelor, thankful—thankful for all mercies! And dear me! here is Mrs. Bonnington, I do declare! Dear madam, how well you look—not twenty, I declare! And dear Mr. Bonnington! Oh, sir! let me—let me, I *must* press your hand. What a sermon last Sunday! All Putney was in tears!"

And the little woman, flinging out her lean arms, seizes portly Mr. Bonnington's fat hand, as he and kind Mrs. Bonnington enter at the open casement. The little woman seems inclined to do the honours of the house. "And won't you go upstairs, and put on your cap? Dear me, what a lovely ribbon! How blue does become Mrs. Bonnington! I always say so to Elizabeth," she cries, peeping into a little packet which Mrs. Bonnington bears in her hand. After exchanging friendly words and greetings with me, that lady retires to put the lovely cap on, followed by her little jackal of an aide-de-camp. The portly clergyman surveys his pleased person in the spacious mirror. "Your things are in your old room—like to go in, and brush up a bit?" whispers Bedford to me. I am obliged to go, you see, though, for my part, I had thought, until Bedford spoke, that the ride on the top of the Putney omnibus had left me without any need of brushing; having aired my clothes, and given my young cheek a fresh and agreeable bloom.

My old room, as Bedford calls it, was that snug apartment communicating by double doors with the drawing-room, and whence you can walk on to the lawn out of the windows.

"Here's your books, here's your writing-paper," says Bedford, leading the way into the chamber. "Does sore eyes good to see *you* down here again, sir. You may smoke now. Clarence Baker smokes when he comes. Go and get some of that wine you like for dinner." And the good fellow's eyes beam kindness upon me as he nods his head, and departs to superintend the duties of his table. Of course you understand that this Bedford was my young printer's boy of former days. What a queer fellow! I had not only been kind to him, but he was grateful.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH I PLAY THE SPY

THE room to which Bedford conducted me I hold to be the very pleasantest chamber in all the mansion of Shrublands. To lie on that comfortable cool bachelor's bed there, and see the birds hopping about on the lawn; to peep out of the French window at early morning, inhale the sweet air, mark the dewy bloom on the grass, listen to the little warblers performing their chorus, step forth in your dressing-gown and slippers, pick a strawberry from the bed, or an apricot in its season; blow one, two, three, just half-a-dozen puffs of a cigarette; hear the venerable towers of Putney toll the hour of six (three hours from breakfast, by consequence), and pop back into bed again with a favourite novel, or review, to set you off (you see I am not malicious, or I could easily insert here the name of some twaddler against whom I have a grudgekin): to pop back into bed again, I say, with a book which sets you off into that dear invaluable second sleep, by which health, spirits, appetite are so prodigiously improved:—all these I hold to be most cheerful and harmless pleasures, and have partaken of them often at Shrublands with a grateful heart. That heart may have had its griefs, but is yet susceptible of enjoyment and consolation. That bosom may have been lacerated, but is not therefore and henceforward a stranger to comfort. After a certain affair in Dublin—nay, very soon after, three months after—I recollect remarking to myself: "Well, thank my stars, I still have a relish for '34 claret." Once at Shrublands I heard steps pacing overhead at night, and the feeble but continued wail of an infant. I wakened from my sleep, was sulky, but turned and slept again. Biddlecombe the barrister, I knew, was the occupant of the upper chamber. He came down the next morning looking wretchedly yellow about the cheeks, and livid round the eyes. His teething infant had kept him on the march all night, and Mrs. Biddlecombe, I am told, scolds him frightfully besides. He munched a shred of toast, and was off by the omnibus to chambers. I chipped a second egg; I may have tried one or two other nice little things on the table (Strasbourg pâté I know I never can resist, and am convinced

it is perfectly wholesome). I could see my own sweet face in the mirror opposite, and my gills were as rosy as any broiled salmon. "Well—well!" I thought as the barrister disappeared on the roof of the coach, "he has *domus* and *placens uxor*—but is she *placens?* *Placetne* to walk about all night with a roaring baby? Is it pleasing to go to bed after a long hard day's work, and have your wife nagnagging you because she has not been invited to the Lady Chancelloress's *soirée*, or what not? Suppose the Glorvina whom you loved so had been yours? Her eyebrows looked as if they could scowl, her eyes as if they could flash with anger. Remember what a slap she gave the little knife-boy for upsetting the butter-boat over her tabinet. Suppose *parvulus aulâ*, a little Batchelor your son, who had the toothache all night in your bedroom?" These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind as I helped myself to the comfortable meal before me. "I say, what a lot of muffins you're eating!" cried innocent Master Lovel. Now the married, the wealthy, the prosperous Biddlecombe only took his wretched scrap of dry toast. "Aha!" you say, "this man is consoling himself after his misfortune." O churl! and do you grudge me consolation? "Thank you, dear Miss Prior. Another cup, and plenty of cream, if you please." Of course, Lady Baker was not at table when I said, "Dear Miss Prior," at breakfast. Before her Ladyship I was as mum as a mouse. Elizabeth found occasion to whisper to me during the day in her demure way: "This is a very rare occasion. Lady B—— never allows me to breakfast alone with Mr. Lovel, but has taken her extra nap, I suppose, because you and Mr. and Mrs. Biddlecombe were here."

Now it may be that one of the double doors of the room which I inhabited was occasionally open, and that Mr. Batchelor's eyes and ears are uncommonly quick, and note a number of things which less observant persons would never regard or discover; but out of this room, which I occupied for some few days, now and subsequently, I looked forth as from a little ambush upon the proceedings of the house, and got a queer little insight into the history and characters of the personages round about me. The two grandmothers of Lovel's children were domineering over that easy gentleman, as women—not grandmothers merely, but sisters, wives, aunts, daughters, when the chance is given them—will domineer. Ah! Glorvina, what a grey mare you might have become had you chosen Mr. Batchelor for your consort! (But this I only remark with a parenthetic sigh.) The two children had taken each the side of a grandmamma, and whilst Master Pop was declared by his maternal grandmother to be a Baker all over, and taught to despise sugar-baking and trade, little Cecilia was Mrs. Bonnington's

favourite, repeated Watts's hymns with fervent precocity; declared that she would marry none but a clergyman; preached infantine sermons to her brother and maid about worldliness; and somewhat wearied me, if the truth must be told, by the intense self-respect with which she regarded her own virtues. The old ladies had that love for each other, which one may imagine that their relative positions would engender. Over the bleeding and helpless bodies of Lovel and his worthy and kind stepfather, Mr. Bonnington, they skirmished and fired shots at each other. Lady B—— would give hints about second marriages, and second families, and so forth, which of course made Mrs. Bonnington wince. Mrs. B—— had the better of Lady Baker, in consequence of the latter's notorious pecuniary irregularities. *She* had never had recourse to her son's purse, she could thank Heaven. She was not afraid of meeting any tradesman in Putney or London: she had never been ordered out of the house in the late Cecilia's lifetime; *she* could go to Boulogne and enjoy the *fresh air* there. This was the terrific whip she had over Baker. Lady B——, I regret to say, in consequence of the failure of remittances, had been locked up in prison, just at a time when she was in a state of violent quarrel with her late daughter, and good Mr. Bonnington had helped her out of durance. How did I know this? Bedford, Lovel's factotum, told me: and how the old ladies were fighting like two cats.

There was one point on which the two ladies agreed. A very wealthy widower, young still, good-looking, and good-tempered, we know can sometimes find a dear woman to console his loneliness, and protect his motherless children. From the neighbouring Heath, from Wimbledon, Roehampton, Barnes, Mortlake, Richmond, Esher, Walton, Windsor, nay, Reading, Bath, Exeter, and Penzance itself, or from any other quarter of Britain, over which your fancy may please to travel, families would have come ready with dear young girls to take charge of that man's future happiness; but it is a fact that these two dragons kept all women off from their ward. An unmarried woman, with decent good looks, was scarce ever allowed to enter Shrublands gate. If such an one appeared, Lovel's two mothers sallied out, and crunched her hapless bones. Once or twice he dared to dine with his neighbours, but the ladies led him such a life that the poor creature gave up the practice, and faintly announced his preference for home. "My dear Batch," says he, "what do I care for the dinners of the people round about? Has any one of them got a better cook or better wine than mine? When I come home from business, it is an intolerable nuisance to have to dress and go out seven or eight miles to cold *entrées*, and loaded claret, and sweet port. I can't stand it, sir. I *won't* stand

it" (and he stamps his foot in a resolute manner). "Give me an easy life, a wine-merchant I can trust, and my own friends, by my own fireside. Shall we have some more? We can manage another bottle among us three, Mr. Bonnington?"

"Well," says Mr. Bonnington, winking at the ruby goblet, "I am sure I have no objection, Frederick, to another bo——"

"Coffee is served, sir," cries Bedford, entering.

"Well—well, perhaps we have had enough," says worthy Bonnington.

"We *have* had enough; we all drink too much," says Lovel briskly. "Come in to coffee."

We go to the drawing-room. Fred and I, and the two ladies, sit down to a rubber, whilst Miss Prior plays a piece of Beethoven to a slight warbling accompaniment from Mr. Bonnington's handsome nose, who has fallen asleep over the newspaper. During our play, Bessy glides out of the room—a grey shadow. Bonnington wakens up when the tray is brought in. Lady Baker likes that good old custom: it was always the fashion at the Castle, and she takes a good glass of negus too; and so do we all; and the conversation is pretty merry, and Fred Lovel hopes I shall sleep better to-night, and is very facetious about poor Biddlecombe, and the way in which that eminent Q.C. is henpecked by his wife.

From my bachelor's room, then, on the ground-floor; or from my solitary walks in the garden, whence I could oversee many things in the house; or from Bedford's communications to me, which were very friendly, curious, and unreserved; or from my own observation, which I promise you can see as far into the millstones of life as most folk's, I grew to find the mysteries of Shrublands no longer mysterious to me; and, like another *Diable Boiteux*, had the roofs of a pretty number of the Shrublands rooms taken off for me.

For instance, on that very first day of my stay, whilst the family were attiring themselves for dinner, I chanced to find two secret cupboards of the house unlocked, and the contents unveiled to me. Pinhorn, the children's maid, a giddy little flirting thing in a pink ribbon, brought some articles of the toilette into my worship's apartment, and as she retired did not shut the door behind her. I might have thought that pert little head had never been made to ache by any care; but ah! black care sits behind the horseman, as Horace remarks, and not only behind the horseman, but behind the footman; and not only on the footman, but on the buxom shoulders of the lady's-maid. So with Pinhorn. You surely have remarked respecting domestic servants that they address you in a tone utterly affected and unnatural—adopting when they are

amongst each other, voices and gestures entirely different from those which their employers see and hear. Now, this little Pinhorn, in her occasional intercourse with your humble servant, had a brisk, quick, fluttering toss of the head, and a frisky manner, no doubt capable of charming some persons. As for me, ancillary allurements have, I own, had but small temptations. If Venus brought me a bedroom candle and a jug of hot water, I should give her sixpence, and no more. Having, you see, given my all to one wom—Psha! never mind *that* old story.—Well, I daresay this little creature may have been a flirt, but I took no more notice of her than if she had been a coal-scuttle.

Now, suppose she *was* a flirt. Suppose, under a mask of levity, she hid a profound sorrow. Do you suppose she was the first woman who ever has done so? Do you suppose because she had fifteen pounds a year, her tea, sugar, and beer, and told fibs to her masters and mistresses, she had not a heart? She went out of the room, absolutely coaxing and leering at me as she departed, with a great counterpane over her arm; but in the next apartment I heard her voice quite changed, and another changed voice too—though not so much altered—interrogating her. My friend Dick Bedford's voice, in addressing those whom Fortune had pleased to make his superiors, was gruff and brief. He seemed to be anxious to deliver himself of his speech to you as quickly as possible; and his tone always seemed to hint, "There—there is my message, and I have delivered it; but you know perfectly well that I am as good as you." And so he was, and so I always admitted: so even the trembling, believing, flustering, suspicious Lady Baker herself admitted, when she came into communication with this man. I have thought of this little Dick as of Swift at Sheen hard by, with Sir William Temple; or Spartacus when he was as yet the servant of the fortunate Roman gentleman who owned him. Now if Dick was intelligent, obedient, useful, only not rebellious with his superiors, I should fancy that amongst his equals he was by no means pleasant company, and that most of them hated him for his arrogance, his honesty, and his scorn of them all.

But women do not always hate a man for scorning and despising them. Women do not revolt at the rudeness and arrogance of us their natural superiors. Women, if properly trained, come down to heel at the master's bidding, and lick the hand that has been often raised to hit them. I do not say that brave little Dick Bedford ever raised an actual hand to this poor serving-girl, but his tongue whipped her, his behaviour trampled on her, and she cried, and came to him whenever he lifted a finger. Psha! Don't tell *me*. If you want a quiet, contented, orderly home, and things

comfortable about you, that is the way you must manage your women.

Well, Bedford happens to be in the next room. It is the morning-room at Shrublands. You enter the dining-room from it, and they are in the habit of laying out the dessert there, before taking it in for dinner. Bedford is laying out his dessert as Pinhorn enters from my chamber, and he begins upon her with a sarcastic sort of grunt, and a "Ho! suppose you've been making up to B., have you?"

"Oh, Mr. Bedford, *you* know very well who it is I cares for!" she says, with a sigh.

"Bother!" Mr. B. remarks.

"Well, Richard, then!" (here she weeps).

"Leave go my 'and!—leave go my a-hand, I say!" (What *could* she have been doing to cause this exclamation?)

"Oh, Richard, it's not your *'and* I want—it's your ah-ah-art, Richard!"

"Mary Pinhorn," exclaims the other, "what's the use of going on with this game? You know we couldn't be a-happy together—you know your ideers ain't no good, Mary. It ain't your fault. *I* don't blame you for it, my dear. Some people are born clever, some are born tall: I ain't tall."

"Oh, you're tall enough for me, Richard!"

Here Richard again found occasion to cry out: "*Don't*, I say! Suppose Baker was to come in and find you squeezing of my hand in this way? I say, some people are born with big brains, Miss Pinhorn, and some with big figures. Look at that ass, Bulkeley, Lady B.'s man! He is as big as a Lifeguardsman, and he has no more education, nor no more ideas, than the beef he feeds on."

"La! Richard, whatever do you mean?"

"Pooh! How should *you* know what I mean? Lay them books straight. Put the volumes together, stupid! and the papers, and get the table ready for nursery tea, and don't go on there mopping your eyes, and making a fool of yourself, Mary Pinhorn!"

"Oh, your heart is a stone—a stone—a stone!" cries Mary, in a burst of tears. "And I wish it was hung round my neck, and I was at the bottom of the well, and—there's the hupstairs bell!" with which signal I suppose Mary disappeared, for I only heard a sort of grunt from Mr. Bedford; then the clatter of a dish or two, the wheeling of chairs and furniture, and then came a brief silence, which lasted until the entry of Dick's subordinate, Buttons, who laid the table for the children's and Miss Prior's tea.

So here was an old story told over again. Here was love unrequited, and a little passionate heart wounded and unhappy. My

poor little Mary! As I am a sinner, I will give thee a crown when I go away, and not a couple of shillings, as my wont has been. Five shillings will not console thee much, but they will console thee a little. Thou wilt not imagine that I bribe thee with any privy thought of evil? Away! "Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück —ich habe—geliebt!"

At this juncture, I suppose Mrs. Prior must have entered the apartment, for though I could not hear her noiseless step, her little cracked voice came pretty clearly to me with a "Good afternoon, Mr. Bedford! Oh, dear me! what a many—many years we have been acquainted! To think of the pretty little printer's boy who used to come to Mr. Batchelor, and see you grown such a fine man!"

Bedford. How? I'm only five foot four.

Mrs. Prior. But such a fine figure, Bedford! You are—now indeed you are! Well, you are strong and I am weak. You are well, and I am weary and faint.

Bedford. The tea's a-coming directly, Mrs. Prior.

Mrs. Prior. Could you give me a glass of water first—and perhaps a little sherry in it, please. Oh, thank you. How good it is! How it revives a poor old wretch!—and your cough, Bedford? How is your cough? I have brought you some lozenges for it—some of Sir Henry Halford's own prescribing for my dear husband, and——

Bedford (*abruptly*). I must go—never mind the cough now, Mrs. P.

Mrs. Prior. What's here? almonds and raisins, macaroons, preserved apricots, biscuits for dessert—and—la bless the man! how you sta—artled me!

Bedford. DON'T! Mrs. Prior: I beg and implore of you, keep your 'ands out of the dessert. I can't stand it. I *must* tell the governor if this game goes on.

Mrs. Prior. Ah! Mr. Bedford, it is for my poor—poor child at home; the doctor recommended her apricots. Ay, indeed, dear Bedford; he did, for her poor chest!

Bedford. And I'm blest if you haven't been at the sherry-bottle again! Oh, Mrs. P., you drive me wild—you do. I can't see Lovel put upon in this way. You know it's only last week I whopped the boy for stealing the sherry, and 'twas you done it.

Mrs. Prior (*passionately*). For a sick child, Bedford. What won't a mother do for her sick child?

Bedford. Your children's always sick. You're always taking things for 'em. I tell you, by the laws, I won't and mustn't stand it, Mrs. P.

Mrs. Prior (*with much spirit*). Go and tell your master, Bedford, Go and tell tales of me, sir. Go and have me dismissed out of this house. Go and have my daughter dismissed out of this house, and her poor mother brought to disgrace.

Bedford. Mrs. Prior—Mrs. Prior! you *have* been a-taking the sherry. A glass I don't mind: but you've been a-bringing that bottle again.

Mrs. Prior (*whimpering*). It's for Charlotte, Bedford! my poor delicate angel of a Shatty! she's ordered it, indeed she is!

Bedford. Confound your Shatty! I can't stand it, I mustn't, and won't, Mrs. P.!

Here a noise and clatter of other persons arriving interrupted the conversation between Lovel's major-domo and the mother of the children's governess, and I presently heard Master Pop's voice saying, "You're going to tea with us, Mrs. Prior?"

Mrs. Prior. Your kind dear grandmammas have asked me, dear Master Popham.

Pop. But you'd like to go to dinner best, wouldn't you? I daresay you have doosid bad dinners at your house. Haven't you, Mrs. Prior?

Cissy. Don't say doosid. It's a naughty word, Popham!

Pop. I *will* say doosid. Doo-oo-oosid! There! And I'll say worse words too, if I please, and you hold *your* tongue. What's there for tea? jam for tea? strawberries for tea? muffins for tea? That's it: strawberries and muffins for tea. And we'll go in to dessert besides: that's prime. I say, Miss Prior!

Miss Prior. What do you say, Popham?

Pop. Shouldn't you like to go in to dessert?—there's lots of good things there,—and have wine? Only when grandmamma tells her story about—about my grandfather and King George the what-d'ye-call-'im? King George the Fourth——

Cis. Ascended the throne, 1820; died at Windsor, 1830.

Pop. Bother Windsor! Well, when she tells that story, I can tell you *that* ain't very good fun.

Cis. And it's rude of you to speak in that way of your grandmamma, Pop!

Pop. And you'll hold *your* tongue, miss! And I shall speak as I like. And I'm a man, and I don't want any of your stuff and nonsense. I say, Mary, give us the marmalade!

Cis. You have had plenty to eat, and boys oughtn't to have so much.

Pop. Boys may have what they like. Boys can eat twice as much as women. There, I don't want any more. Anybody may have the rest.

"WHERE THE SUGAR GOES."

Mrs. Prior. What nice marmalade! I know some children, my dears, who——

Miss Prior (*imploringly*). Mamma, I beseech you——

Mrs. Prior. I know three dear children who very—very seldom have nice marmalade and delicious cake.

Pop. I know whom you mean: you mean Augustus, and Frederick, and Fanny—your children? Well, they shall have marmalade and cake.

Cis. Oh yes, I will give them all mine.

Pop. (*who speaks, I think, as if his mouth was full*). I won't give 'em mine: but they can have another pot, you know. You have always got a basket with you; you know you have, Mrs. Prior. You had it the day you took the cold fowl.

Mrs. Prior. For the poor blind black man! Oh, how thankful he was to his dear young benefactors! He is a man and a brother, and to help him was most kind of you, dear Master Popham!

Pop. That black beggar my brother? He ain't my brother.

Mrs. Prior. No, dears, you have both the most lovely complexions in the world.

Pop. Bother complexions! I say, Mary, another pot of marmalade.

Mary. I don't know, Master Pop——

Pop. I *will* have it, I say. If you don't I'll smash everything, I will.

Cis. Oh, you naughty rude boy!

Pop. Hold your tongue, stupid! I will have it, I say.

Mrs. Prior. Do humour him, Mary, please. And I'm sure my dear children at home will be better for it.

Pop. There's your basket. Now put this cake in, and this bit of butter, and this sugar on the top of the butter. Hurray! hurray! Oh, what jolly fun! Here's some cake—no, I think I'll keep that; and, Mrs. Prior, tell Gus, and Fanny, and Fred I sent it to 'em, and they shall never want for anything as long as Frederick Popham Baker Lovel, Esquire, can give it them. Did Gus like my grey greatcoat that I didn't want?

Miss Prior. You did not give him your new greatcoat?

Pop. It was beastly ugly, and I did give it him; and I'll give him this if I choose. And don't you speak to me; I'm going to school, and I ain't going to have no governesses soon.

Mrs. Prior. Ah, dear child! what a nice coat it is; and how well my boy looks in it!

Miss Prior. Mother, mother! I implore you—mother——

Mr. Lovel enters. So the children at high tea! How d'ye do,

Mrs. Prior? I think we shall be able to manage that little matter for your second boy, Mrs. Prior.

Mrs. Prior. Heaven bless you, — bless you, my dear kind benefactor! Don't prevent me, Elizabeth: I *must* kiss his hand. There!

And here the second bell rings, and I enter the morning-room, and can see Mrs. Prior's great basket popped cunningly under the table-cloth. Her basket?—her *porte-manteau*, her *porte-bouteille*, her *porte-gâteau*, her *porte-pantalon*, her *porte-butin* in general. Thus I could see that every day Mrs. Prior visited Shrublands she gleaned greedily of the harvest. Well, Boaz was rich, and this ruthless Ruth was hungry and poor.

At the welcome summons of the second bell, Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington also made their appearance; the latter in the new cap which Mrs. Prior had admired, and which she saluted with a nod of smiling recognition: "Dear madam, it *is* lovely—I told you it was," whispers Mrs. P., and the wearer of the blue ribbons turned her bonny good-natured face towards the looking-glass, and I hope saw no reason to doubt Mrs. Prior's sincerity. As for Bonnington, I could perceive that he had been taking a little nap before dinner,—a practice by which the appetite is improved, I think, and the intellect prepared for the bland prandial conversation.

"Have the children been quite good?" asks papa of the governess.

"There are worse children, sir," says Miss Prior meekly.

"Make haste and have your dinner; we are coming in to dessert!" cries Pop.

"You would not have us go to dine without your grandmother?" papa asks. Dine without Lady Baker, indeed! I should have liked to see him go to dinner without Lady Baker.

Pending her Ladyship's arrival, papa and Mr. Bonnington walk to the open window, and gaze on the lawn and the towers of Putney rising over the wall.

"Ah, my good Mrs. Prior," cries Mrs. Bonnington, "those grandchildren of mine are sadly spoiled."

"Not by *you*, dear madam," says Mrs. Prior, with a look of commiseration. "Your dear children at home are, I am sure, perfect models of goodness. Is Master Edward well, ma'am? and Master Robert, and Master Richard, and dear funny little Master William? Ah, what blessings those children are to you! If a certain wilful little nephew of theirs took after them!"

"The little naughty wretch!" cried Mrs. Bonnington; "do you know, Prior, my grandson Frederick—(I don't know why they call him Popham in this house, or why he should be ashamed of his

father's name)—do you know that Popham spilt the ink over my dear husband's bands, which he keeps in his great dictionary, and fought with my Richard, who is three years older than Popham, and actually beat his own uncle!"

"Gracious goodness!" I cried; "you don't mean to say, ma'am, that Pop has been laying violent hands upon his venerable relative?" I feel ever so gentle a pull at my coat. Was it Miss Prior who warned me not to indulge in the sarcastic method with good Mrs. Bonnington?

"I don't know why you call my poor child a venerable relative," Mrs. B. remarks. "I know that Popham was very rude to him: and then Robert came to his brother, and that graceless little Popham took a stick, and my husband came out, and do you know Popham Lovel actually kicked Mr. Bonnington on the shins, and butted him like a little naughty ram; and if you think such conduct is a subject for ridicule—I *don't*, Mr. Batchelor."

"My dear—dear lady!" I cried, seizing her hand; for she was going to cry, and in woman's eye the unanswerable tear always raises a deuce of a commotion in my mind. "I would not for the world say a word that should willingly vex you; and as for Popham, I give you my honour, I think nothing would do that child so much good as a good whipping."

"He is spoiled, madam; we know by *whom*," says Mrs. Prior. "Dear Lady Baker! how that red does become your Ladyship!" In fact, Lady B. sailed in at this juncture, arrayed in ribbons of scarlet; with many brooches, bangles, and other gimcracks ornamenting her plenteous person. And now her Ladyship having arrived, Bedford announced that dinner was served, and Lovel gave his mother-in-law an arm, whilst I offered mine to Mrs. Bonnington to lead her to the adjoining dining-room. And the placable kind soul speedily made peace with me. And we ate and drank of Lovel's best. And Lady Baker told us her celebrated anecdote of George the Fourth's compliment to her late dear husband, Sir Popham, when his Majesty visited Ireland. Mrs. Prior and her basket were gone when we repaired to the drawing-room: having been hunting all day, the hungry mother had returned with her prey to her wide-mouthed birdikins. Elizabeth looked very pale and handsome, reading at her lamp. And whist and the little tray finished the second day at Shrublands.

I paced the moonlit walk alone when the family had gone to rest; and smoked my cigar under the tranquil stars. I had been some thirty hours in the house, and what a queer little drama was unfolding itself before me! What struggles and passions were going on here—what *certamina* and *motus animorum!* Here was

Lovel, this willing horse; and what a crowd of relations, what a heap of luggage had the honest fellow to carry! How that little Mrs. Prior was working, and scheming, and tacking, and flattering, and fawning, and plundering, to be sure! And that serene Elizabeth, with what consummate skill, art, and prudence had she to act, to keep her place with two such rivals reigning over her! And Elizabeth not only kept her place, but she actually was liked by those two women! Why, Elizabeth Prior, my wonder and respect for thee increase with every hour during which I contemplate thy character! How is it that you live with those lionesses, and are not torn to pieces? What sops of flattery do you cast to them to appease them? Perhaps I do not think my Elizabeth brings up her two children very well, and, indeed, have seldom become acquainted with young people more odious. But is the fault hers, or is it Fortune's spite? How, with these two grandmothers spoiling the children alternately, can the governess do better than she does? How has she managed to lull their natural jealousy? I will work out that intricate problem, that I will, ere many days are over. And there are other mysteries which I perceive. There is poor Mary breaking her heart for the butler. That butler, why does he connive at the rogueries of Mrs. Prior? Ha! herein lies a mystery too; and I vow I will penetrate it ere long. So saying, I fling away the butt-end of the fragrant companion of my solitude, and enter into my room by the open French window just as Bedford walks in at the door. I had heard the voice of that worthy domestic warbling a grave melody from his pantry window as I paced the lawn. When the family goes to rest, Bedford passes a couple of hours in study in his pantry, perusing the newspapers and the new works, and forming his opinion on books and politics. Indeed, I have reason to believe that the letters in the *Putney Herald and Mortlake Monitor*, signed "A Voice from the Basement," were Mr. Bedford's composition.

"Come to see all safe for the night, sir, and the windows closed before you turn in," Mr. Dick remarks. "Best not leave 'em open even if you are asleep inside—catch cold—many bad people about. Remember Bromley murder!—Enter at French windows—you cry out—cut your throat—and there's a fine paragraph for papers next morning!"

"What a good voice you have, Bedford!" I say; "I heard you warbling just now—a famous bass, on my word!"

"Always fond of music—sing when I'm cleaning my plate—learned in old Beak Street. *She* used to teach me," and he points towards the upper floors.

"What a little chap you were then!—when you came for my proofs for the *Museum*," I remark.

"I ain't a very big one now, sir; but it ain't the big ones that do the best work," remarks the butler.

"I remember Miss Prior saying that you were as old as she was.'

"Hm! and I scarce came up to her—eh—elbow." (Bedford had constantly to do battle with the aspirates. He conquered them, but you could see there was a struggle.)

"And it was Miss Prior taught you to sing?" I say, looking him full in the face.

He dropped his eyes—he could not bear my scrutiny. I knew the whole story now.

"When Mrs. Lovel died at Naples, Miss Prior brought home the children, and you acted as courier to the whole party?"

"Yes, sir," says Bedford. "We had the carriage, and of course poor Mrs. L. was sent home by sea, and I brought home the young ones, and—and the rest of the family. I could say, Avanti! avanti! to the Italian postillions, and ask for des chevaux when we crossed the Halps—the Alps,—I beg your pardon, sir."

"And you used to see the party to their rooms at the inns, and call them up in the morning, and you had a blunderbuss in the rumble to shoot the robbers?"

"Yes," says Bedford.

"And it was a pleasant time?"

"Yes," says Bedford, groaning and hanging down his miserable head. "Oh yes, it was a pleasant time."

He turned away; he stamped his foot; he gave a sort of imprecation; he pretended to look at some books, and dust them with a napkin which he carried. I saw the matter at once. "Poor Dick!" says I.

"It's the old—old story," says Dick. "It's you and the Hirish girl over again, sir. I'm only a servant, I know; but I'm a——. Confound it!" And here he stuck his fists into his eyes.

"And this is the reason you allow old Mrs. Prior to steal the sherry and the sugar?" I ask.

"How do you know that?—you remember how she prigged in Beak Street?" asks Bedford fiercely.

"I overheard you and her just before dinner," I said.

"You had better go and tell Lovel—have me turned out of the house. That's the best thing that can be done," cries Bedford again fiercely, stamping his feet.

"It is always my custom to do as much mischief as I possibly can, Dick Bedford," I say, with fine irony.

He seizes my hand. "No, you're a trump—everybody knows that; beg pardon, sir; but you see I'm so—so—dash!—miserable, that I hardly know whether I'm walking on my head or my heels."

"You haven't succeeded in touching her heart, then, my poor Dick?" I said.

Dick shook his head. "She has no heart," he said. "If she ever had any, that fellar in India took it away with him. She don't care for anybody alive. She likes me as well as any one. I think she appreciates me, you see, sir; she can't 'elp it—I'm blest if she can. She knows I am a better man than most of the chaps that come down here,—I am, if I wasn't a servant. If I were only an apothecary—like that grinning jackass who comes here from Barnes in his gig, and wants to marry her—she'd have me. She keeps him on, and encourages him—she can do that cleverly enough. And the old dragon fancies she is fond of him. Psha! Why am I making a fool of myself?—I am only a servant. Mary's good enough for me; *she'll* have me fast enough. I beg your pardon, sir; I am making a fool of myself; I ain't the first, sir. Good night, sir; hope you'll sleep well." And Dick departs to his pantry and his private cares, and I think, "Here is another victim who is writhing under the merciless arrows of the universal torturer."

"He is a very singular person," Miss Prior remarked to me, as, next day, I happened to be walking on Putney Heath by her side, while her young charges trotted on and quarrelled in the distance. "I wonder where the world will stop next, dear Mr. Batchelor, and how far the march of intellect will proceed! Any one so free, and easy, and cool, as this Mr. Bedford, I never saw. When we were abroad with poor Mrs. Lovel, he picked up French and Italian in quite a surprising way. He takes books down from the library now: the most abstruse works—works that *I* couldn't pretend to read, I'm sure. Mr. Bonnington says he has taught himself history, and Horace in Latin, and algebra, and I don't know what besides. He talked to the servants and tradespeople at Naples much better than *I* could, I assure you." And Elizabeth tosses up her head heavenwards, as if she would ask of yonder skies how such a man could possibly be as good as herself.

She stepped along the Heath—slim, stately, healthy, tall—her firm neat foot treading swiftly over the grass. She wore her blue spectacles, but I think she could have looked at the sun without the glasses and without wincing. That sun was playing with her tawny wavy ringlets, and scattering gold-dust over them.

"It is wonderful," said I, admiring her, "how these people give themselves airs, and try to imitate their betters!"

"Most extraordinary!" says Bessy. She had not one particle

of humour in all her composition. I think Dick Bedford was right; and she had no heart. Well, she had famous lungs, health, appetite, and with these one may get through life not uncomfortably.

"You and Saint Cecilia got on pretty well, Bessy?" I ask.

"Saint who?"

"The late Mrs. L."

"Oh, Mrs. Lovel:—yes. What an odd person you are! I did not understand whom you meant," says Elizabeth the downright.

"Not a good temper, I should think! She and Fred fought?"

"*He* never fought."

"I think a little bird has told me that she was not averse to the admiration of our sex?"

"I don't speak ill of my friends, Mr. Batchelor," replies Elizabeth the prudent.

"You must have difficult work with the two old ladies at Shrublands?"

Bessy shrugs her shoulders. "A little management is necessary in all families," she says. "The ladies are naturally a little jealous one of the other; but they are both of them not unkind to me in the main; and I have to bear no more than other women in my situation. It was not all pleasure at St. Boniface, Mr. Batchelor, with my uncle and aunt. I suppose all governesses have their difficulties! and I must get over mine as best I can, and be thankful for the liberal salary which your kindness procured for me, and which enables me to help my poor mother and my brothers and sisters."

"I suppose you give all your money to her?"

"Nearly all. They must have it; poor mamma has so many mouths to feed."

"And notre petit cœur, Bessy?" I ask, looking in her fresh face. "Have we replaced the Indian officer?"

Another shrug of the shoulders. "I suppose we all get over those follies, Mr. Batchelor. I remember somebody else was in a sad way too,"—and she looks askance at the victim of Glorvina. "*My* folly is dead and buried long ago. I have to work so hard for mamma, and my brothers and sisters, that I have no time for such nonsense."

Here a gentleman in a natty gig, with a high-trotting horse, came spanking towards us over the common, and with my profound knowledge of human nature, I saw at once that the servant by the driver's side was a little doctor's boy, and the gentleman himself was a neat and trim general practitioner.

He stared at me grimly, as he made a bow to Miss Bessy. I saw jealousy and suspicion in his aspect.

"Thank you, dear Mr. Drencher," says Bessy, "for your kindness to mamma and our children. You are going to call at Shrublands? Lady Baker was indisposed this morning. She says when she can't have Doctor Piper, there's nobody like you." And this artful one smiles blandly on Mr. Drencher.

"I have got the workhouse, and a case at Roehampton, and I shall be at Shrublands *about two,* Miss Prior," says that young Doctor, whom Bedford had called a grinning jackass. He laid an eager emphasis on the *two.* Go to! I know what two and two mean as well as most people, Mr. Drencher! Glances of rage he shot at me from out his gig. The serpents of that miserable Æsculapius unwound themselves from his rod, and were gnawing at his swollen heart!

"He has a good practice, Mr. Drencher?" I ask, sly rogue as I am.

"He is very good to mamma and our children. His practice with *them* does not profit him much," says Bessy.

"And I suppose our walk will be over before two o'clock?" remarks that slyboots who is walking with Miss Prior.

"I hope so. Why, it is our dinner-time; and this walk on the Heath does make one so hungry!" cries the governess.

"Bessy Prior," I said, "it is my belief that you no more want spectacles than a cat in the twilight." To which she replied, that I was such a strange odd man, she really could not understand me.

We were back at Shrublands at two. Of course we must not keep the children's dinner waiting: and of course Mr. Drencher drove up at five minutes past two, with his gig-horse all in a lather. I, who knew the secrets of the house, was amused to see the furious glances which Bedford darted from the sideboard, or as he served the Doctor with cutlets. Drencher, for his part, scowled at me. I, for my part, was easy, witty, pleasant, and I trust profoundly wicked and malicious. I bragged about my aristocratic friends to Lady Baker. I trumped her old-world stories about George the Fourth at Dublin with the latest dandified intelligence I had learned at the Club. That the young Doctor should be dazzled and disgusted was, I own, my wish; and I enjoyed his rage as I saw him choking with jealousy over his victuals.

But why was Lady Baker sulky with me? How came it, my fashionable stories had no effect upon that polite matron? Yesterday at dinner she had been gracious enough: and turning her back upon those poor simple Bonnington, who knew nothing of the *beau monde* at all, had condescended to address herself specially to me several times with an "I need not tell *you,* Mr. Batchelor, that the Duchess of Dorsetshire's maiden name was De Bobus;" or, "You

know very well that the etiquette at the Lord Lieutenant's balls, at Dublin Castle, is for the wives of baronets to"—&c. &c.

Now whence, I say, did it arise that Lady Baker, who had been kind and familiar with me on Sunday, should on Monday turn me a shoulder as cold as that lamb which I offered to carve for the family, and which remained from yesterday's quarter? I had thought of staying but two days at Shrublands. I generally am bored at country-houses. I was going away on the Monday morning, but Lovel, when he and I and the children and Miss Prior breakfasted together before he went to business, pressed me to stay so heartily and sincerely that I agreed, gladly enough, to remain. I could finish a scene or two of my tragedy at my leisure; besides, there were one or two little comedies going on in the house which inspired me with no little curiosity.

Lady Baker growled at me, then, during lunch-time. She addressed herself in whispers and hints to Mr. Drencher. She had in her own man, Bulkeley, and bullied him. She desired to know whether she was to have the barouche or not; and when informed that it was at her Ladyship's service, said it was a great deal too cold for the open carriage, and that she would have the brougham. When she was told that Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington had impounded the brougham, she said she had no idea of people taking other people's carriages: and when Mr. Bedford remarked that her Ladyship had her choice that morning, and had chosen the barouche, she said, "I didn't speak to you, sir; and I will thank you not to address me until you are spoken to!" She made the place so hot that I began to wish I had quitted it.

"And pray, Miss Prior, where is Captain Baker to sleep," she asked, "now that the ground-floor room is engaged?"

Miss Prior meekly said, "Captain Baker would have the pink room."

"The room on my landing-place, without double doors? Impossible! Clarence is always smoking. Clarence will fill the whole house with his smoke. He shall *not* sleep in the pink room. I expected the ground-floor room for him, which—a—this gentleman persists in not vacating." And the dear creature looked me full in the face.

"This gentleman smokes, too, and is so comfortable where he is, that he proposes to remain there," I say with a bland smile.

"Haspic of plovers' eggs, sir," says Bedford, handing a dish over my back. And he actually gave me a little dig, and growled, "Go it—give it her!"

"There is a capital inn on the Heath," I continue, peeling one of my opal favourites. "If Captain Baker must smoke, he may have a room there."

"Sir! my son does not live at inns," cries Lady Baker.

"Oh, grandma! don't he, though? And wasn't there a row at the 'Star and Garter'; and didn't pa pay Uncle Clarence's bill there, though?"

"Silence, Popham! Little boys should be seen and not heard," says Cissy. "Shouldn't little boys be seen and not heard, Miss Prior?"

"They shouldn't insult their grandmothers. O my Cecilia—my Cecilia!" cries Lady Baker, lifting her hand.

"You shan't hit me! I say you shan't hit me!" roars Pop, starting back, and beginning to square at his enraged ancestress. The scene was growing painful. And there was that rascal of a Bedford choking with suppressed laughter at the sideboard. Bulkeley, her Ladyship's man, stood calm as fate; but young Buttons burst out in a guffaw; on which, I assure you, Lady Baker looked as savage as Lady Macbeth.

"Am I to be insulted by my daughter's servants?" cries Lady Baker. "I will leave the house this instant."

"At what hour will your Ladyship have the barouche?" says Bedford, with perfect gravity.

If Mr. Drencher had whipped out a lancet and bled Lady B—— on the spot, he would have done her good. I shall draw the curtain over this sad—this humiliating scene. Drop, little curtain! on this absurd little act.

CHAPTER IV

A BLACK SHEEP

THE being for whom my friend Dick Bedford seemed to have a special contempt and aversion, was Mr. Bulkeley, the tall footman in attendance upon Lovel's dear mother-in-law. One of the causes of Bedford's wrath, the worthy fellow explained to me. In the servants' hall, Bulkeley was in the habit of speaking in disrespectful and satirical terms of his mistress, enlarging upon her many foibles, and describing her pecuniary difficulties to the many *habitués* of that second social circle at Shrublands. The hold which Mr. Bulkeley had over his lady lay in a long unsettled account of wages, which her Ladyship was quite disinclined to discharge. And, in spite of this insolvency, the footman must have found his profit in the place, for he continued to hold it from year to year, and to fatten on his earnings, such as they were. My Lady's dignity did not allow her to travel without this huge personage in her train ; and a great comfort it must have been to her, to reflect that in all the country-houses which she visited (and she would go wherever she could force an invitation), her attendant freely explained himself regarding her peculiarities, and made his brother servants aware of his mistress's embarrassed condition. And yet the woman, whom I suppose no soul alive respected (unless, haply, she herself had a hankering delusion that she was a respectable woman), thought that her position in life forbade her to move abroad without a maid, and this hulking encumbrance in plush ; and never was seen anywhere, in watering-place, country-house, hotel, unless she was so attended.

Between Bedford and Bulkeley, then, there was feud and mutual hatred. Bedford chafed the big man by constant sneers and sarcasms, which penetrated the other's dull hide, and caused him frequently to assert that he would punch Dick's ugly head off. The housekeeper had frequently to interpose, and fling her matronly arms between these men of war ; and perhaps Bedford was forced to be still at times, for Bulkeley was nine inches taller than himself, and was perpetually bragging of his skill and feats as a bruiser. This sultan may also have wished to fling his pocket-handkerchief

to Miss Mary Pinhorn, who, though she loved Bedford's wit and cleverness, might also be not insensible to the magnificent chest, calves, whiskers, of Mr. Bulkeley. On this delicate subject, however, I can't speak. The men hated each other. You have, no doubt, remarked in your experience of life, that when men *do* hate each other, about a woman, or some other cause, the real reason is never assigned. You say, "The conduct of such and such a man to his grandmother—his behaviour in selling that horse to Benson—his manner of brushing his hair down the middle"—or what you will, "makes him so offensive to me that I can't endure him." His verses, therefore, are mediocre; his speeches in Parliament are utter failures; his practice at the bar is dwindling every year; his powers (always small) are utterly leaving him, and he is repeating his confounded jokes until they quite nauseate. Why, only about myself, and within these three days, I read a nice little article—written in sorrow, you know, not in anger—by our eminent *confrère* Wiggins, deploring the decay of, &c. &c. And Wiggins's little article which was not found suitable for a certain Magazine?—*Allons donc!* The drunkard says the pickled salmon gave him the headache; the man who hates us gives *a* reason, but not *the* reason. Bedford was angry with Bulkeley for abusing his mistress at the servants' table? Yes. But for what else besides? I don't care—nor possibly does your worship, the exalted reader, for these low vulgar kitchen quarrels.

Out of that ground-floor room, then, I would not move in spite of the utmost efforts of my Lady Baker's broad shoulder to push me out; and with many grins that evening, Bedford complimented me on my gallantry in routing the enemy at luncheon. I think he may possibly have told his master, for Lovel looked very much alarmed and uneasy when we greeted each other on his return from the City, but became more composed when Lady Baker appeared at the second dinner-bell, without a trace on her fine countenance of that storm which had caused all her waves to heave with such commotion at noon. How finely some people, by the way, can hang up quarrels—or pop them into a drawer—as they do their work, when dinner is announced, and take them out again at a convenient season! Baker was mild, gentle, a thought sad and sentimental—tenderly interested about her dear son and daughter in Ireland, whom she *must* go and see—quite easy in hand, in a word, and to the immense relief of all of us. She kissed Lovel on retiring, and prayed blessings on her Frederick. She pointed to the picture: nothing could be more melancholy or more gracious.

"*She* go!" says Mr. Bedford to me at night—"not she. She knows when she's well off; was obliged to turn out of Bakerstown

before she came here: that brute Bulkeley told me so. She's always quarrelling with her son and his wife. Angels don't grow everywhere as they do at Putney, Mr. B.! You gave it her well to-day at lunch, you did though!" During my stay at Shrublands, Mr. Bedford paid me a regular evening visit in my room, set the *carte du pays* before me, and in his curt way acquainted me with the characters of the inmates of the house, and the incidents occurring therein.

Captain Clarence Baker did not come to Shrublands on the day when his anxious mother wished to clear out my nest (and expel the amiable bird in it) for her son's benefit. I believe an important fight, which was to come off in the Essex Marshes, and which was postponed in consequence of the interposition of the county magistrates, was the occasion, or at any rate the pretext, of the Captain's delay. "He likes seeing fights better than going to 'em, the Captain does," my major-domo remarked. "His regiment was ordered to India, and he sold out: climate don't agree with his precious health. The Captain ain't been here ever so long, not since poor Mrs. L.'s time, before Miss P. came here: Captain Clarence and his sister had a tremendous quarrel together. He was up to all sorts of pranks, the Captain was. Not a good lot, by any means, I should say, Mr. Batchelor." And here Bedford begins to laugh. "Did you ever read, sir, a farce called 'Raising the Wind?' There's plenty of Jeremy Diddlers now, Captain Jeremy Diddlers and Lady Jeremy Diddlers too. Have you such a thing as half-a-crown about you? If you have, don't invest it in some folks' pockets—that's all. Beg your pardon, sir, if I am bothering you with talking."

As long as I was at Shrublands, and ready to partake of breakfast with my kind host and his children and their governess, Lady Baker had her own breakfast taken to her room. But when there were no visitors in the house, she would come groaning out of her bedroom to be present at the morning meal; and not uncommonly would give the little company anecdotes of the departed saint, under whose invocation, as it were, we were assembled, and whose simpering effigy looked down upon us, over her harp, and from the wall. The eyes of the portrait followed you about, as portraits' eyes so painted will; and those glances, as it seemed to me, still domineered over Lovel, and made him quail as they had done in life. Yonder, in the corner, was Cecilia's harp, with its leathern cover. I likened the skin to that drum which the dying Zisca ordered should be made out of his hide, to be beaten before the hosts of his people and inspire terror. *Vous concevez*, I did not say to Lovel at breakfast, as I sat before the ghostly musical instrument, "My dear fellow,

that skin of Cardovan leather belonging to your defunct Cecilia's harp is like the hide which," &c.; but I confess, at first, I used to have a sort of *crawly* sensation, as of a sickly genteel ghost flitting about the place, in an exceedingly peevish humour, trying to scold and command, and finding her defunct voice couldn't be heard—trying to re-illumine her extinguished leers and faded smiles and ogles, and finding no one admired or took note. In the grey of the gloaming, in the twilight corner where stands the shrouded companion of song—what is that white figure flickering round the silent harp? Once, as we were assembled in the room at afternoon tea, a bird, entering at the open window, perched on the instrument. Popham dashed at it. Lovel was deep in conversation upon the wine duties with a Member of Parliament he had brought down to dinner. Lady Baker, who was, if I may use the expression, "jawing," as usual, and telling one of her tremendous stories about the Lord Lieutenant to Mr. Bonnington, took no note of the incident. Elizabeth did not seem to remark it: what was a bird on a harp to her, but a sparrow perched on a bit of leather-casing! All the ghosts in Putney churchyard might rattle all their bones, and would not frighten that stout spirit!

I was amused at a precaution which Bedford took, and somewhat alarmed at the distrust towards Lady Baker which he exhibited, when, one day on my return from town—whither I had made an excursion of four or five hours—I found my bedroom door locked, and Dick arrived with the key. "He's wrote to say he's coming this evening, and if he had come when you was away, Lady B. was capable of turning your things out, and putting his in, and taking her oath she believed you was going to leave. The long-bows Lady B. do pull are perfectly awful, Mr. B.! So it was long-bow to long-bow, Mr. Batchelor; and I said you had took the key in your pocket, not wishing to have your papers disturbed. She tried the lawn window, but I had bolted that, and the Captain will have the pink room, after all, and must smoke up the chimney. I should have liked to see him, or you, or any one do it in poor Mrs. L.'s time—I just should."

During my visit to London, I had chanced to meet my friend Captain Fitzb—dle, who belongs to a dozen Clubs, and knows something of every man in London. "Know anything of Clarence Baker? Of course I do," says Fitz; "and if you want any *renseignement*, my dear fellow, I have the honour to inform you that a blacker little sheep does not trot the London *pavé*. Wherever that ingenious officer's name is spoken—at Tattersall's, at his Clubs, in his late regiments, in men's society, in ladies' society, in that expanding and most agreeable circle which you may call no society

at all—a chorus of maledictions rises up at the mention of Baker. Know anything of Clarence Baker? My dear fellow, enough to make your hair turn white, unless (as I sometimes fondly imagine) nature has already performed that process, when of course I can't pretend to act upon mere hair-dye." (The whiskers of the individual who addressed me, innocent, stared me in the face as he spoke, and were dyed of the most unblushing purple.) "Clarence Baker, sir, is a young man who would have been invaluable in Sparta as a warning against drunkenness and an exemplar of it. He has helped the regimental surgeon to some most interesting experiments in *delirium tremens*. He is known, and not in the least trusted, in every billiard-room in Brighton, Canterbury, York, Sheffield—on every pavement which has rung with the clink of dragoon boot-heels. By a wise system of revoking at whist he has lost games which have caused not only his partners, but his opponents and the whole Club, to admire him and to distrust him: long before and since he was of age, he has written his eminent name to bills which have been dishonoured, and has nobly pleaded his minority as a reason for declining to pay. From the garrison towns where he has been quartered, he has carried away not only the hearts of the milliners, but their gloves, haberdashery, and perfumery. He has had controversies with Cornet Green regarding horse transactions; disputed turf accounts with Lieutenant Brown; and betting and backgammon differences with Captain Black. From all I have heard he is the worthy son of his admirable mother. And I bet you even on the four events, if you stay three days in a country-house with him—which appears to be your present happy idea—that he will quarrel with you, insult you and apologise; that he will intoxicate himself more than once; that he will offer to play cards with you, and not pay on losing (if he wins, I perhaps need not state what his conduct will be); and that he will try to borrow money from you, and most likely from your servant, before he goes away." So saying, the sententious Fitz strutted up the steps of one of his many club-haunts in Pall Mall, and left me forewarned, and I trust forearmed, against Captain Clarence and all his works.

The adversary, when at length I came in sight of him, did not seem very formidable. I beheld a weakly little man with Chinese eyes, and pretty little feet and hands, whose pallid countenance told of Finishes and Casinos. His little chest and fingers were decorated with many jewels. A perfume of tobacco hung round him. His little moustache was twisted with an elaborate gummy curl. I perceived that the little hand which twirled the moustache shook woefully: and from the little chest there came a cough surprisingly loud and dismal.

He was lying on a sofa as I entered, and the children of the house were playing round him. "If you are our uncle, why didn't you come to see us oftener?" asks Popham.

"How should I know that you were such uncommonly nice children?" asked the Captain.

"We're not nice to you," says Popham. "Why do you cough so? Mamma used to cough. And why does your hand shake so?"

"My hand shakes because I am ill: and I cough because I'm ill. Your mother died of it, and I daresay I shall too."

"I hope you'll be good, and repent before you die, uncle, and I will lend you some nice books," says Cecilia.

"Oh, bother books!" cries Pop.

"And I hope *you'll* be good, Popham," and "You hold *your* tongue, miss," and "I shall," and "I shan't," and "You're another," and "I'll tell Miss Prior,"—"Go and tell, telltale,"—"Boo"—"Boo"—"Boo"—Boo"—and I don't know what more exclamations came tumultuously and rapidly from these dear children, as their uncle lay before them, a handkerchief to his mouth, his little feet high raised on the sofa cushions.

Captain Baker turned a little eye towards me, as I entered the room, but did not change his easy and elegant posture. When I came near to the sofa where he reposed, he was good enough to call out—

"Glass of sherry!"

"It's Mr. Batchelor; it isn't Bedford, uncle," says Cissy.

"Mr. Batchelor ain't got any sherry in his pocket: have you, Mr. Batchelor? You ain't like old Mrs. Prior, always pocketing things, are you?" cries Pop. and falls a-laughing at the ludicrous idea of my being mistaken for Bedford.

"Beg your pardon. How should I know, you know?" drawls the invalid on the sofa. "Everybody's the same now, you see."

"Sir!" say I, and "sir" was all I could say. The fact is, I could have replied with something remarkably neat and cutting, which would have transfixed the languid little jackanapes who dared to mistake me for a footman; but, you see, I only thought of my repartee some eight hours afterwards when I was lying in bed, and I am sorry to own that a great number of my best *bonmots* have been made in that way. So, as I had not the pungent remark ready when wanted, I can't say I said it to Captain Baker, but I daresay I turned very red, and said "Sir!" and—and in fact that was all.

"You were goin' to say somethin'?" asked the Captain affably.

"You know my friend Mr. Fitzboodle, I believe?" said I; the fact is, I really did not know what to say.

"Some mistake—think not."

"He is a member of the 'Flag Club,'" I remarked, looking my young fellow hard in the face.

"I ain't. There's a set of cads in that Club that will say anything."

"You may not know him, sir, but he seemed to know you very well. Are we to have any tea, children?" I say, flinging myself down on an easy-chair, taking up a magazine, and adopting an easy attitude, though I daresay my face was as red as a turkey-cock's, and I was boiling over with rage.

As we had a very good breakfast and a profuse luncheon at Shrublands, of course we could not support nature till dinner-time without a five-o'clock tea; and this was the meal for which I pretended to ask. Bedford, with his silver kettle, and his buttony satellite, presently brought in this refection, and of course the children bawled out to him—

"Bedford—Bedford! Uncle mistook Mr. Batchelor for you."

"I could not be mistaken for a more honest man, Pop," said I. And the bearer of the tea-urn gave me a look of gratitude and kindness which, I own, went far to restore my ruffled equanimity.

"Since you are the butler, will you get me a glass of sherry and a biscuit?" says the Captain. And Bedford retiring, returned presently with the wine.

The young gentleman's hand shook so, that in order to drink his wine, he had to surprise it, as it were, and seize it with his mouth, when a shake brought the glass near his lips. He drained the wine and held out his hand for another glass. The hand was steadier now.

"You the man who was here before?" asks the Captain.

"Six years ago, when you were here, sir," says the butler.

"What! I ain't changed, I suppose?"

"Yes, you are, sir."

"Then, how the dooce do you remember me?"

"You forgot to pay me some money you borrowed of me, one pound five, sir," says Bedford, whose eyes slyly turned in my direction.

And here, according to her wont at this meal, the dark-robed Miss Prior entered the room. She was coming forward with her ordinarily erect attitude and firm step, but paused in her walk an instant, and when she came to us, I thought, looked remarkably pale. She made a slight curtsey, and it must be confessed that Captain Baker rose up from his sofa for a moment when she appeared. She then sat down, with her back towards him, turning towards herself the table and its tea apparatus.

At this board my Lady Baker found us assembled when she returned from her afternoon drive. She flew to her darling reprobate of a son. She took his hand, she smoothed back his hair from his damp forehead. "My darling child," cries this fond mother, "what a pulse you have got!"

"I suppose, because I've been drinking," says the prodigal.

"Why didn't you come out driving with me? The afternoon was lovely!"

"To pay visits at Richmond? Not as I knows on, ma'am," says the invalid. "Conversation with elderly ladies about poodles, Bible societies, that kind of thing? It must be a doosid lovely afternoon that would make me like that sort of game." And here comes a fit of coughing, over which mamma ejaculates her sympathy.

"Kick—kick—killin' myself!" gasps out the Captain; "know I am. No man *can* lead my life, and stand it. Dyin' by inches! Dyin' by whole yards, by Jo—ho—hove, I am!" Indeed, he was as bad in health as in morals, this graceless Captain.

"That man of Lovel's seems a d—— insolent beggar," he presently and ingenuously remarks.

"Oh, Uncle, you mustn't say those words!" cries niece Cissy.

"He's a man, and may say what he likes, and so will I, when I'm a man. Yes, and I'll say it now, too, if I like," cries Master Popham.

"Not to give me pain, Popham? Will you?" asks the governess.

On which the boy says—"Well, who wants to hurt you, Miss Prior?"

And our colloquy ends by the arrival of the man of the house from the City.

What I have admired in some dear women is their capacity for quarrelling and for reconciliation. As I saw Lady Baker hanging round her son's neck, and fondling his scanty ringlets, I remembered the awful stories with which in former days she used to entertain us regarding this reprobate. Her heart was pincushioned with his filial crimes. Under her chestnut front her Ladyship's real head of hair was grey, in consequence of his iniquities. His precocious appetite had devoured the greater part of her jointure. He had treated her many dangerous illnesses with indifference: had been the worst son, the worst brother, the most ill-conducted schoolboy, the most immoral young man—the terror of households, the Lovelace of garrison towns, the perverter of young officers; in fact, Lady Baker did not know how she supported existence at all under the agony occasioned by his crimes, and it was only from the possession

of a more than ordinarily strong sense of religion that she was enabled to bear her burden.

The Captain himself explained these alternating maternal caresses and quarrels in his easy way.

"Saw how the old lady kissed and fondled me?" says he to his brother-in-law. "Quite refreshin', ain't it? Hang me, I thought she was goin' to send me a bit of sweetbread off her own plate. Came up to my room last night, wanted to tuck me up in bed, and abused my brother to me for an hour. You see, when I'm in favour, she always abuses Baker; when *he's* in favour she abuses me to him. And my sister-in-law, didn't she give it my sister-in-law! Oh! I'll trouble you. And poor Cecilia—why, hang me, Mr. Batchelor, she used to go on—this bottle's corked, I'm hanged if it isn't—to go on about Cecilia, and call her——Hullo!"

Here he was interrupted by our host, who said sternly—

"Will you please to forget those quarrels, or not mention them here? Will you have more wine, Batchelor?"

And Lovel rises, and haughtily stalks out of the room. To do Lovel justice, he had a great contempt and dislike for his young brother-in-law, which, with his best magnanimity, he could not at all times conceal.

So our host stalks towards the drawing-room, leaving Captain Clarence sipping wine.

"Don't go too," says the Captain. "He's a confounded rum fellow, my brother-in-law is. He's a confounded ill-conditioned fellow too. They always are, you know, these tradesmen fellows, these half-bred 'uns. I used to tell my sister so; but she *would* have him, because he had such lots of money, you know. And she threw over a fellar she was very fond of; and I told her she'd regret it. I told Lady B. she'd regret it. It was all Lady B.'s doing. She made Cissy throw the fellar over. He was a bad match, certainly, Tom Mountain was; and not a clever fellow, you know, or that sort of thing; but, at any rate, he was a gentleman, and better than a confounded sugar-baking beggar out of Ratcliff Highway."

"You seem to find that claret very good," I remark, speaking, I may say, Socratically, to my young friend, who had been swallowing bumper after bumper.

"Claret good? Yes, doosid good!"

"Well, you see our confounded sugar-baker gives you his best."

"And why shouldn't he, hang him? Why, the fellow chokes with money. What does it matter to him how much he spends? You're a poor man, I daresay. You don't look as if you were overflush of money. Well, if *you* stood a good dinner, it would be

all right—I mean it would show—you understand me, you know. But a sugar-baker with ten thousand a year, what does it matter to him, bottle of claret more—less?"

"Let us go in to the ladies," I say.

"Go in to mother! *I* don't want to go in to my mother," cries out the artless youth. "And I don't want to go in to the sugar-baker, hang him! and I don't want to go in to the children; and I'd rather have a glass of brandy-and-water with you, old boy. Here you! What's your name? Bedford! I owe you five-and-twenty shillings, do I, old Bedford? Give us a glass of Schnapps, and I'll pay you! Look here, Batchelor. I hate that sugar-baker. Two years ago, I drew a bill on him, and he wouldn't pay it—perhaps he would have paid it, but my sister wouldn't let him. And, I say, shall we go and have a cigar in your room? My mother's been abusing you to me like fun this morning. She abuses everybody. She used to abuse Cissy. Cissy used to abuse her—used to fight like two cats——"

And if I narrate this conversation, dear Spartan youth! if I show thee this Helot maundering in his cups, it is that from his odious example thou may'st learn to be moderate in the use of thine own. Has the enemy who has entered thy mouth ever stolen away thy brains? Has wine ever caused thee to blab secrets; to utter egotisms and follies? Beware of it. Has it ever been thy friend at the end of the hard day's work, the cheery companion of thy companions, the promoter of harmony, kindness, harmless social pleasure? Be thankful for it. Three years since, when the comet was blazing in the autumnal sky, I stood on the château-steps of a great claret proprietor. "Boirai-je de ton vin, O comète?" I said, addressing the luminary with the flaming tail. "Shall those generous bunches which you ripen yield their juices for me *moriturо?*" It was a solemn thought. Ah! my dear brethren! who knows the Order of the Fates? When shall we pass the Gloomy Gates? Which of us goes, which of us waits to drink those famous Fifty-eights? A sermon, upon my word! And pray why not a little homily on an autumn eve over a purple cluster? . . . If that rickety boy had only drunk claret, I warrant you his tongue would not have blabbed, his hand would not have shaken, his wretched little brain and body would not have reeled with fever.

"'Gad," said he next day to me, "cut again last night. Have an idea that I abused Lovel. When I have a little wine on board, always speak my mind, don't you know? Last time I was here in my poor sister's time, said somethin' to her, don't quite know what it was, somethin' confoundedly true and unpleasant I daresay. I think it was about a fellow she used to go on with before she

married the sugar-baker. And I got orders to quit, by Jove, sir—neck and crop, sir, and no mistake! And we gave it one another over the stairs. Oh, my! we did pitch in!—and that was the last time I ever saw Cecilia—give you my word. A doosid unforgiving woman my poor sister was; and between you and me, Batchelor, as great a flirt as ever threw a fellar over. You should have heard her and my Lady B. go on, that's all!—Well, mamma, are you going out for a drive in the coachy-poachy?—Not as I knows on, thank you, as I before had the honour to observe. Mr. Batchelor and me are going to play a little game at billiards." We did, and I won; and, from that day to this, have never been paid my little winnings.

On the day after the doughty Captain's arrival, Miss Prior, in whose face I had remarked a great expression of gloom and care, neither made her appearance at breakfast nor at the children's dinner. "Miss Prior was a little unwell," Lady Baker said, with an air of most perfect satisfaction. "Mr. Drencher will come to see her this afternoon, and prescribe for her, I daresay," adds her Ladyship, nodding and winking a roguish eye at me. I was at a loss to understand what was the point of humour which amused Lady B., until she herself explained it.

"My good sir," she said, "I think Miss Prior is not at all *averse* to being ill." And the nods recommenced.

"As how?" I ask.

"To being ill, or at least to calling in the medical man."

"Attachment between governess and Sawbones I make bold for to presume?" says the Captain.

"Precisely, Clarence—a very fitting match. I saw the affair, even before Miss Prior owned it—that is to say, she has not denied it. She says she can't afford to marry, that she has children enough at home in her brothers and sisters. She is a well-principled young woman, and does credit, Mr. Batchelor, to your recommendation, and the education she has received from her uncle, the Master of St. Boniface."

"Cissy to school; Pop to Eton; and Miss What-d'you-call to grind the pestle in Sawbones's back-shop: I see!" says Captain Clarence. "He seems a low vulgar blackguard, that Sawbones."

"Of course, my love, what can you expect from that sort of person?" asks mamma, whose own father was a small attorney in a small Irish town.

"I wish I had his confounded good health," cries Clarence, coughing.

"My poor darling!" says mamma.

I said nothing. And so Elizabeth was engaged to that great

broad-shouldered, red-whiskered young surgeon with the huge appetite and the dubious *h*'s! Well, why not? What was it to me? Why shouldn't she marry him? Was he not an honest man, and a fitting match for her? Yes. Very good. Only if I *do* love a bird or flower to glad me with its dark blue eye, it is the first to fade away. If I *have* a partiality for a young gazelle, it is the first to——psha! What have I to do with this namby-pamby? Can the heart that has truly loved ever forget, and doesn't it as truly love on to the——stuff! I am past the age of such follies. I might have made a woman happy: I think I should. But the fugacious years have lapsed, my Posthumus! My waist is now a good bit wider than my chest, and it is decreed that I shall be alone!

My tone, then, when next I saw Elizabeth, was sorrowful—not angry. Drencher, the young doctor, came punctually enough, you may be sure, to look after his patient. Little Pinhorn, the children's maid, led the young practitioner smiling towards the schoolroom regions. His creaking highlows sprang swiftly up the stairs. I happened to be in the hall, and surveyed him with a grim pleasure. "Now he is in the schoolroom," I thought. "Now he is taking her hand—it is very white—and feeling her pulse. And so on, and so on. Surely, surely, Pinhorn remains in the room?" I am sitting on a hall-table as I muse plaintively on these things, and gaze up the stairs by which the Hakeem (great carroty-whiskered cad!) has passed into the sacred precincts of the harem. As I gaze up the stair, another door opens into the hall; a scowling face peeps through that door, and looks up the stair, too. 'Tis Bedford, who has slid out of his pantry, and watches the doctor. And thou, too, my poor Bedford! Oh! the whole world throbs with vain heart-pangs, and tosses and heaves with longing unfulfilled desires! All night, and all over the world, bitter tears are dropping as regular as the dew, and cruel memories are haunting the pillow. Close my hot eyes, kind Sleep! Do not visit it, dear delusive images out of the Past! Often you figure shimmers through my dreams, Glorvina. Not as you are now, the stout mother of many children—you always had an alarming likeness to your own mother, Glorvina—but as you were—slim, black-haired, blue-eyed—when your carnation lips warbled the "Vale of Avoca" or the "Angel's Whisper." "What!" I say then, looking up the stair, "am I absolutely growing jealous of you apothecary?—O fool!" And at this juncture, out peers Bedford's face from the pantry, and I see he is jealous too. I tie my shoe as I sit on the table; I don't affect to notice Bedford in the least (who, in fact, pops his own head back again as soon as he sees mine). I take my wideawake from the peg, set it on one side of my head, and strut whistling

out of the hall-door. I stretch over Putney Heath, and my spirit resumes its tranquillity.

I sometimes keep a little journal of my proceedings, and on referring to its pages, the scene rises before me pretty clearly to which the brief notes allude. On this day I find noted :—

"*Friday, July* 14.

"B. came down to-day. Seems to require a great deal of attendance from Dr. ——. Row between dowagers after dinner."

"B.," I need not remark, is Bessy. "Dr.," of course, you know. "Row between dowagers" means a battle royal between Mrs. Bonnington and Lady Baker, such as not unfrequently raged under the kindly Lovel's roof.

Lady Baker's gigantic menial Bulkeley condescended to wait at the family dinner at Shrublands, when perforce he had to put himself under Mr. Bedford's orders. Bedford would gladly have dispensed with the London footman, over whose calves, he said, he and his boy were always tumbling; but Lady Baker's dignity would not allow her to part from her own man; and her good-natured son-in-law allowed her, and indeed almost all other persons, to have their own way. I have reason to fear Mr. Bulkeley's morals were loose. Mrs. Bonnington had a special horror of him; his behaviour in the village public-houses, where his powder and plush were for ever visible—his freedom of conduct and conversation before the good lady's nurse and parlour-maids—provoked her anger and suspicion. More than once, she whispered to me her loathing of this flour-besprinkled monster; and, as much as such a gentle creature could, she showed her dislike to him by her behaviour. The flunkey's solemn equanimity was not to be disturbed by any such feeble indications of displeasure. From his powdered height, he looked down upon Mrs. Bonnington, and her esteem or her dislike was beneath him

Now on this Friday night the 14th, Captain Clarence had gone to pass the day in town, and our Bessy made her appearance again, the Doctor's prescriptions having, I suppose, agreed with her. Mr. Bulkeley, who was handing coffee to the ladies, chose to offer none to Miss Prior, and I was amused when I saw Bedford's heel scrunch down on the flunkey's right foot, as he pointed towards the governess. The oaths which Bulkeley had to devour in silence must have been frightful. To do the gallant fellow justice, I think he would have died rather than speak before company in a drawing-room. He limped up and offered the refreshment to the young lady, who bowed and declined it.

"Frederick," Mrs. Bonnington begins, when the coffee ceremony is over, "now the servants are gone, I must scold you about the waste at your table, my dear. What was the need of opening that great bottle of champagne? Lady Baker only takes two glasses. Mr. Batchelor doesn't touch it." (No, thank you, my dear Mrs. Bonnington: too old a stager.) "Why not have a little bottle instead of that great, large, immense one? Bedford is a teetotaller. I suppose it is *that London footman who likes it.*"

"My dear mother, I haven't really ascertained his tastes," says Lovel.

"Then why not tell Bedford to open a pint, dear?" pursues mamma.

"Oh, Bedford — Bedford, we must not mention *him*, Mrs. Bonnington!" cries Lady Baker. "Bedford is faultless. Bedford has the keys of everything. Bedford is not to be controlled in anything. Bedford is to be at liberty to be rude to my servant."

"Bedford was admirably kind in his attendance on your daughter, Lady Baker," says Lovel, his brow darkening; "and as for your man, I should think he was big enough to protect himself from any rudeness of poor Dick!" The good fellow had been angry for one moment, at the next he was all for peace and conciliation.

Lady Baker puts on her superfine air. With that air she had often awe-stricken good simple Mrs. Bonnington; and she loved to use it whenever City folk or humble people were present. You see she thought herself your superior and mine, as *de par le monde* there are many artless Lady Bakers who do. "My dear Frederick!" says Lady B. then, putting on her best Mayfair manner, "excuse me for saying, but you don't know the—the class of servant to which Bulkeley belongs. I had him as a great favour from Lord Toddleby's. That—that class of servant is not generally accustomed to go out single."

"Unless they are two behind a carriage-perch they pine away, I suppose," remarks Mr. Lovel, "as one love-bird does without his mate."

"No doubt—no doubt," says Lady B., who does not in the least understand him; "I only say you are not accustomed here—in this kind of establishment, you understand—to that class of——"

But here Mrs. Bonnington could contain her wrath no more. "Lady Baker!" cries that injured mother, "is my son's establishment not good enough for any powdered wretch in England? Is the house of a British merchant——"

"My dear creature—my dear creature!" interposes her Lady-

ship, "it *is* the house of a British merchant, and a most comfortable house too."

"Yes, *as you find it*," remarks mamma.

"Yes, as I find it, when I come to take care of that *departed angel's children*, Mrs. Bonnington!"—(Lady B. here indicates the Cecilian effigy)—"of that dear seraph's orphans, Mrs. Bonnington! *You* cannot. You have other duties—other children—a husband, whom you have left at home in delicate health, and who——"

"Lady Baker!" exclaims Mrs. Bonnington, "no one shall say I don't take care of my dear husband!"

"My dear Lady Baker!—my dear—dear mother!" cries Lovel, *éploré*, and whimpers aside to me, "They spar in this way every night, when we're alone. It's too bad, ain't it, Batch?"

"I say you *do* take care of Mr. Bonnington," Baker blandly resumes (she has hit Mrs. Bonnington on the raw place, and smilingly proceeds to thong again): "I say you *do* take care of your husband, my dear creature, and that is why you can't attend to Frederick! And as he is of a very easy temper,—except sometimes with his poor Cecilia's mother,—he allows all his tradesmen to cheat him; all his servants to cheat him; Bedford to be rude to everybody; and if to me, why not to my servant Bulkeley, with whom Lord Toddleby's groom of the chambers gave me the very highest character?"

Mrs. Bonnington in a great flurry broke in by saying she was surprised to hear that noblemen *had* grooms in their chambers: and she thought they were much better in the stables: and when they dined with Captain Huff, you know, Frederick, *his* man always brought such a dreadful smell of the stable in with him, that—— Here she paused. Baker's eye was on her; and that dowager was grinning a cruel triumph.

"He!—he! You mistake, my good Mrs. Bonnington!" says her Ladyship. "Your poor mother mistakes, my dear Frederick. You have lived in a quiet and most respectable sphere, but not, you understand, not——"

"Not what, pray, Lady Baker? We have lived in this neighbourhood twenty years: in my late husband's time, when *we saw a great deal of company*, and this dear Frederick was a boy at Westminster School. And we have *paid* for everything we have had for twenty years; and we have not owed a penny to any *tradesman*. And we may not have had *powdered footmen*, six feet high, impertinent beasts, who were rude to all the maids in the place. Don't—I *will* speak, Frederick! But servants who loved us, and who were *paid their wages*, and who—o—ho—ho—ho!"

Wipe your eyes, dear friends! out with all your pocket-

handkerchiefs. I protest I cannot bear to see a woman in distress. Of course Fred Lovel runs to console his dear old mother, and vows Lady Baker meant no harm.

"Meant harm! My dear Frederick, what harm can I mean? I only said your poor mother did not seem to know what a groom of the chambers was! How should she?"

"Come—come," says Frederick, "enough of this! Miss Prior, will you be so kind as to give us a little music?"

Miss Prior was playing Beethoven at the piano, very solemnly and finely, when our Black Sheep returned to this quiet fold, and, I am sorry to say, in a very riotous condition. The brilliancy of his eye, the purple flush on his nose, the unsteady gait, and uncertain tone of voice, told tales of Captain Clarence, who stumbled over more than one chair before he found a seat near me.

"Quite right, old boy," says he, winking at me. "Cut again—dooshid good fellosh. Better than being along with you shtoopid-old-fogish." And he began to warble wild "Fol-de-rol-lols" in an insane accompaniment to the music.

"By heavens, this is too bad!" growls Lovel. "Lady Baker, let your big man carry your son to bed. Thank you, Miss Prior!"

At a final yell, which the unlucky young scapegrace gave, Elizabeth stopped, and rose from the piano, looking very pale. She made her curtsey, and was departing, when the wretched young Captain sprang up, looked at her, and sank back on the sofa with another wild laugh. Bessy fled away scared, and white as a sheet.

"TAKE THE BRUTE TO BED!" roars the master of the house, in great wrath. And scapegrace was conducted to his apartment, whither he went laughing wildly, and calling out, "Come on, old sh-sh-shugar-baker!"

The morning after this fine exhibition, Captain Clarence Baker's mamma announced to us that her poor dear suffering boy was too ill to come to breakfast, and I believe he prescribed for himself devilled drumstick and soda-water, of which he partook in his bedroom. Lovel, seldom angry, was violently wroth with his brother-in-law; and, almost always polite, was at breakfast scarcely civil to Lady Baker. I am bound to say that female abused her position. She appealed to Cecilia's picture a great deal too much during the course of breakfast. She hinted, she sighed, she waggled her head at me, and spoke about "that angel" in the most tragic manner. Angel is all very well; but your angel brought in *à tout propos;* your departed blessing called out of her grave ever so many times a day; when grandmamma wants to carry a point of her own; when the children are naughty, or noisy; when papa

betrays a flickering inclination to dine at his Club, or to bring home a bachelor friend or two to Shrublands;—I say your angel always dragged in by the wings into the conversation loses her effect. No man's heart put on wider crape than Lovel's at Cecilia's loss. Considering the circumstances, his grief was most creditable to him: but at breakfast, at lunch, about Bulkeley the footman, about the barouche or the phaeton, or any trumpery domestic perplexity, to have a *Deus intersit* was too much. And I observed, with some inward satisfaction, that when Baker uttered her pompous funereal phrases, rolled her eyes up to the ceiling, and appealed to that quarter, the children ate their jam and quarrelled and kicked their little shins under the table, Lovel read his paper and looked at his watch to see if it was omnibus time; and Bessy made the tea, quite undisturbed by the old lady's tragical prattle.

When Baker described her son's fearful cough and dreadfully feverish state, I said, "Surely, Lady Baker, *Mr. Drencher* had better be sent for;" and I suppose I uttered the disgusting dissyllable Drencher with a fine sarcastic accent; for once, just once, Bessy's grey eyes rose through the spectacles and met mine with a glance of unutterable sadness, then calmly settled down on to the slop-basin again, or the urn, in which her pale features, of course, were odiously distorted.

"You will not bring anybody home to dinner, Frederick, in my poor boy's state?" asks Lady B.

"He may stay in his bedroom I suppose," replies Lovel.

"He is Cecilia's brother, Frederick!" cries the Lady.

"Conf——" Lovel was beginning. What was he about to say?

"If you are going to confound your angel in heaven, I have nothing to say, sir!" cries the mother of Clarence.

"Parbleu, madame!" cried Lovel, in French; "if he were not my wife's brother, do you think I would let him stay here?"

"Parly Français? Oui, oui, oui!" cries Pop. "I know what pa means!"

"And so do *I* know. And I shall lend Uncle Clarence some books which Mr. Bonnington gave me, and——"

"Hold your tongue all!" shouts Lovel, with a stamp of his foot.

"You will, perhaps, have the great kindness to allow me the use of your carriage,—or, at least, to wait here until my poor suffering boy can be moved, Mr. Lovel?" says Lady B., with the airs of a martyr.

Lovel rang the bell. "The carriage for Lady Baker—at her Ladyship's hour, Bedford: and the cart for her luggage. Her Ladyship and Captain Baker are going away."

"I have lost one child, Mr. Lovel, whom some people seem

to forget. I am not going to murder another! I will not leave this house, sir, *unless you drive me from it by force*, until the medical man has seen my boy!" And here she and sorrow sat down again. She was always giving warning. She was always fitting the halter and traversing the cart, was Lady B., but she for ever declined to drop the handkerchief and have the business over. I saw by a little shrug in Bessy's shoulders what the governess's views were of the matter: and, in a word, Lady B. no more went away on this day, than she had done on forty previous days when she announced her intention of going. She would accept benefits, you see, but then she insulted her benefactors, and so squared accounts.

That great healthy, florid, scarlet-whiskered medical wretch came at about twelve, saw Mr. Baker and prescribed for him: and *of course* he must have a few words with Miss Prior, and inquire into the state of her health. Just as on the previous occasion, I happened to be in the hall when Drencher went upstairs; Bedford happened to be looking out of his pantry-door: I burst into a yell of laughter when I saw Dick's livid face—the sight somehow suited my savage soul.

No sooner was Medicus gone than Bessy, grave and pale, in bonnet and spectacles, came sliding downstairs. I do not mean down the banister, which was Pop's favourite method of descent; but slim, tall, noiseless, in a nunlike calm, she swept down the steps. Of course I followed her. And there was Master Bedford's nose peeping through the pantry-door at us, as we went out with the children. Pray, what business of *his* was it to be always watching anybody who walked with Miss Prior?

"So, Bessy," I said, "what report does Mr.—hem!—Mr. Drencher—give of the interesting invalid?"

"Oh, the most horrid! He says that Captain Baker has several times had a dreadful disease brought on by drinking, and that he is mad when he has it. He has delusions, sees demons, when he is in this state—wants to be watched."

"Drencher tells you everything?"

She says meekly: "He attends us when we are ill."

I remark, with fine irony: "He attends the whole family: he is always coming to Shrublands!"

"He comes very often," Miss Prior says gravely.

"And do you mean to say, Bessy," I cry, madly cutting off two or three heads of yellow broom with my stick—"do you mean to say a fellow like that, who drops his *h*'s about the room, is a welcome visitor?"

"I should be very ungrateful if he were not welcome, Mr.

Batchelor," says Miss Prior. "And call me by my surname, please —and he has taken care of all my family—and——"

"And, of course, of course, of course, Miss Prior!" say I brutally; "and this is the way the world wags; and this is the way we are ill, and are cured; and we are grateful to the doctor that cures us!"

She nods her grave head. "You used to be kinder to me once, Mr. Batchelor, in old days—in your—in my time of trouble! Yes, my dear, that is a beautiful bit of broom! Oh, what a fine butterfly!" (Cecilia scours the plain after the butterfly.) "You used to be kinder to me once—when we were both unhappy."

"I was unhappy," I say, "but I survived. I was ill, but I am now pretty well, thank you. I was jilted by a false heartless woman. Do you suppose there are no other heartless women in the world?" And I am confident, if Bessy's breast had not been steel, the daggers which darted out from my eyes would have bored frightful stabs in it.

But she shook her head, and looked at me so sadly that my eye-daggers tumbled down to the ground at once; for you see, though I am a jealous Turk, I am a very easily appeased jealous Turk; and if I had been Bluebeard, and my wife, just as I was going to decapitate her, had lifted up her head from the block, and cried a little, I should have dropped my scimitar, and said, "Come, come, Fatima, never mind for the present about that key and closet business, and I'll chop your head off some other morning." I say, Bessy disarmed me. Pooh! I say, women will make a fool of me to the end. Ah! ye gracious Fates! Cut my thread of life ere it grow too long. Suppose I were to live till seventy, and some little wretch of a woman were to set her cap at me? She would catch me—I know she would. All the males of our family have been spoony and soft, to a degree perfectly ludicrous and despicable to contemplate—— Well, Bessy Prior, putting a hand out, looked at me, and said—

"You are the oldest and best friend I have ever had, Mr. Batchelor—the only friend."

"Am I, Elizabeth?" I gasp, with a beating heart.

"Cissy is running back with a butterfly." (Our hands unlock.) "Don't you see the difficulties of my position? Don't you know that ladies are often jealous of governesses; and that unless—unless they imagined I was—I was favourable to Mr. Drencher, who is very good and kind—the ladies of Shrublands might not like my remaining alone in the house with—with—you understand?" A moment the eyes look over the spectacles: at the next, the meek bonnet bows down towards the ground.

I wonder did she hear the bump—bumping of my heart! O heart!—O wounded heart! did I ever think thou wouldst bump—bump again? "Egl—Egl—izabeth," I say, choking with emotion, "do, do, do you—te—tell me—you don't—don't—don't—lo—love that apothecary?"

She shrugs her shoulder—her charming shoulder.

"And if," I hotly continue, "if a gentleman—if a man of mature age certainly, but who has a kind heart and four hundred a year of his own—were to say to you, 'Elizabeth! will you bid the flowers of a blighted life to bloom again?—Elizabeth! will you soothe a wounded heart?'——"

"Oh, Mr. Batchelor!" she sighed, and then added quickly, "Please, don't take my hand. Here's Pop."

And that dear child (bless him!) came up at the moment, saying, "Oh, Miss Prior, look here! I've got such a jolly big toadstool!" And next came Cissy, with a confounded butterfly. O Richard the Third! Haven't you been maligned because you smothered two little nuisances in a Tower? What is to prove to me that you did not serve the little brutes right, and that you weren't a most humane man? Darling Cissy coming up, then, in her dear charming way, says, "You shan't take Mr. Batchelor's hand, you shall take *my* hand!" And she tosses up her little head, and walks with the instructress of her youth.

"Ces enfants ne comprennent guère le Français," says Miss Prior, speaking very rapidly.

"Après loncbe?" I whisper. The fact is, I was so agitated I hardly knew what the French for lunch was. And then our conversation dropped: and the beating of my own heart was all the sound I heard.

Lunch came. I couldn't eat a bit: I should have choked. Bessy ate plenty, and drank a glass of beer. It was her dinner, to be sure. Young *Blacksheep* did not appear. We did not miss him. When Lady Baker began to tell her story of George the Fourth at Slane Castle, I went into my own room. I took a book. Books? Psha! I went into the garden. I took out a cigar. But no, I would not smoke it. Perhaps she——many people don't like smoking.

I went into the garden. "Come into the garden, Maud." I sat by a large lilac-bush. I waited. Perhaps she would come? The morning-room windows were wide open on the lawn. Will she never come? Ah! what is that tall form advancing? gliding—gliding into the chamber like a beauteous ghost? "Who most does like an angel show, you may be sure 'tis she." She comes up to the glass. She lays her spectacles down on the mantelpiece.

She puts a slim white hand over her auburn hair and looks into the mirror. Elizabeth, Elizabeth! I come!

As I came up, I saw a horrid little grinning, debauched face surge over the back of a great armchair and look towards Elizabeth. It was Captain Blacksheep, of course. He laid his elbows over the chair. He looked keenly and with a diabolical smile at the unconscious girl; and just as I reached the window, he cried out, "*Bessy Bellenden, by Jove!*"

Elizabeth turned round, gave a little cry, and—— but what happened I shall tell in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH I AM STUNG BY A SERPENT

IF when I heard Baker call out Bessy Bellenden, and adjure Jove, he had run forward and seized Elizabeth by the waist, or offered her other personal indignity, I too should have run forward on my side and engaged him. Though I am a stout elderly man, short in stature and in wind, I know I am a match for *that* rickety little Captain on his high-heeled boots. A match for him? I believe Miss Bessy would have been a match for both of us. Her white arm was as hard and polished as ivory. Had she held it straight pointed against the rush of the dragoon, he would have fallen backwards before his intended prey: I have no doubt he would. It was the hen, in this case, was stronger than the libertine fox, and *au besoin* would have pecked the little marauding vermin's eyes out. Had, I say, Partlet been weak, and Reynard strong, I *would* have come forward: I certainly would. Had he been a wolf now, instead of a fox, I am certain I should have run in upon him, grappled with him, torn his heart and tongue out of his black throat, and trampled the lawless brute to death.

Well, I didn't do any such thing. I was just *going* to run in —and I didn't. I was just going to rush to Bessy's side to clasp her (I have no doubt) to my heart: to beard the whiskered champion who was before her, and perhaps say, "Cheer thee—cheer thee, my persecuted maiden, my beauteous love—my Rebecca! Come on, Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert, thou dastard Templar! It is I, Sir Wilfrid of Ivanhoe." (By the way, though the fellow was not a *Templar*, he was a *Lincoln's-Inn-man*, having passed twice through the Insolvent Court there with infinite discredit.) But I made no heroic speeches. There was no need for Rebecca to jump out of window and risk her lovely neck. How could she, in fact, the French window being flush with the ground-floor? And I give you my honour, just as I was crying my war-cry, couching my lance, and rushing *à la rescousse* upon Sir Baker, a sudden thought made me drop my (figurative) point: a sudden idea made me rein in my galloping (metaphorical) steed and spare Baker for that time.

Suppose I had gone in? But for that sudden precaution, there

might have been a Mrs. Batchelor. I might have been a bullied father of ten children. (Elizabeth has a fine high temper of her own.) What is four hundred and twenty a year, with a wife and perhaps half-a-dozen children? Should I have been a whit the happier? Would Elizabeth? Ah! no. And yet I feel a certain sort of shame, even now, when I think that I didn't go in. Not that I was in a fright, as some people choose to hint. I swear I was not. But the reason why I did not charge was this——

Nay, I *did* charge part of the way, and then, I own, stopped. It was an error in judgment. It wasn't a want of courage. Lord George Sackville was a brave man, and as cool as a cucumber under fire. Well, *he* didn't charge at the battle of Minden, and Prince Ferdinand made the deuce and all of a disturbance, as we know. Byng was a brave man,—and I ask, wasn't it a confounded shame executing him? So with respect to myself. Here is my statement. I make it openly. I don't care. I am accused of seeing a woman insulted, and not going to her rescue. I am not guilty, I say. That is, there were reasons which caused me not to attack. Even putting aside the superior strength of Elizabeth herself to the enemy, —I vow there were cogent and honourable reasons why I did not charge home.

You see I happened to be behind a blue lilac-bush (and was turning a rhyme—Heaven help us!—in which *death* was only to part me and Elizabeth) when I saw Baker's face surge over the chair-back. I rush forward as he cries "By Jove!" Had Miss Prior cried out on her part, the strength of twenty Heenans, I know, would have nerved this arm; but all she did was to turn pale, and say, "Oh, mercy! Captain Baker! Do pity me!"

"What! you remember me, Bessy Bellenden, do you?" asks the Captain, advancing.

"Oh, not that name! please, not that name!" cries Bessy.

"I thought I knew you yesterday," says Baker. "Only, gad, you see, I had so much claret on board, I did not much know what was what. And oh! Bessy, I have got such a splitter of a head-ache."

"Oh! please—please, my name is Miss Prior. Pray! pray, sir, don't——"

"You've got handsomer—doosid deal handsomer. Know you now well, your spectacles off. You come in here—teach my nephew and niece, humbug my sister, make love to the sh—— Oh! you uncommon sly little toad!"

"Captain Baker, I beg—I implore you," says Bessy, or something of the sort: for the white hands assumed an attitude of supplication.

"Pooh! don't gammon *me!*" says the rickety Captain (or words to that effect), and seizes those two firm white hands in his moist trembling palms.

Now do you understand why I paused? When the dandy came grinning forward, with looks and gestures of familiar recognition: when the pale Elizabeth implored him to spare her:—a keen arrow of jealousy shot whizzing through my heart, and caused me well-nigh to fall backwards as I ran forwards. I bumped up against a bronze group in the garden. The group represented a lion stung by a serpent. *I* was a lion stung by a serpent too. Even Baker could have knocked me down. Fiends and anguish! he had known her before. The Academy, the life she had led, the wretched old tipsy ineffective guardian of a father—all these antecedents in poor Bessy's history passed through my mind. And I had offered my heart and troth to this woman! Now, my dear sir, I appeal to you. What would *you* have done? Would *you* have liked to have such a sudden suspicion thrown over the being of your affection? "Oh! spare me—spare me!" I heard her say, in clear—too clear—pathetic tones. And then there came rather a shrill "Ah!" and then the lion was up in my breast again; and I give you my honour, just as I was going to step forward—to step?—to *rush* forward from behind the urn where I had stood for a moment with thumping heart, Bessy's "Ah!" or little cry was followed by a *whack*, which I heard as clear as anything I ever heard in my life;—and I saw the little Captain spin back, topple over a chair heels up, and in this posture heard him begin to scream and curse in shrill tones. . . .

Not for long, for as the Captain and the chair tumble down, a door springs open;—a man rushes in, who pounces like a panther upon the prostrate Captain, pitches into his nose and eyes, and chokes his bad language by sending a fist down his naughty throat.

"Oh! thank you, Bedford!—please, leave him, Bedford! that's enough. There, don't hurt him any more!" says Bessy, laughing—laughing, upon my word.

"Ah! will you?" says Bedford. "Lie still, you little beggar, or I'll knock your head off. Look here, Miss Prior?—Elizabeth—dear—dear Elizabeth! I love you with all my heart, and soul, and strength—I do."

"O Bedford! Bedford!" warbles Elizabeth.

"I do! I can't help it. I must say it! Ever since Rome, I do. Lie still, you drunken little beast! It's no use. But I adore you, O Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" And there was Dick, who was always following Miss P. about, and poking his head into keyholes to spy her, actually making love to her over the prostrate body of the Captain.

BEDFORD TO THE RESCUE.

Now, what was I to do? Wasn't I in a most confoundedly awkward situation? A lady had been attacked—*a* lady?—*the* lady, and I hadn't rescued her. Her insolent enemy was overthrown, and I hadn't done it. A champion, three inches shorter than myself, had come in, and dealt the blow. I was in such a rage of mortification, that I should have liked to thrash the Captain and Bedford too. The first I know I could have matched: the second was a tough little hero. And it was he who rescued the damsel, whilst I stood by! In a strait so odious, sudden, and humiliating, what should I, what could I, what did I do?

Behind the lion and snake there is a brick wall and marble balustrade, built for no particular reason, but flanking three steps and a grassy terrace, which then rises up on a level to the house-windows. Beyond the balustrade is a shrubbery of more lilacs and so forth, by which you can walk round into another path, which also leads up to the house. So as I had not charged—ah! woe is me!—as the battle was over, I—I just went round that shrubbery into the other path, and so entered the house, arriving like Fortinbras in "Hamlet," when everybody is dead and sprawling, you know, and the whole business is done.

And was there to be no end to my shame, or to Bedford's laurels? In that brief interval, whilst I was walking round the bypath (just to give myself a pretext for entering coolly into the premises), this fortunate fellow had absolutely engaged another and larger champion. This was no other than Bulkeley, my Lady B.'s first-class attendant. When the Captain fell, amidst his screams and curses, he called for Bulkeley: and that individual made his appearance, with a little Scotch cap perched on his powdered head.

"Hullo! what's the row year?" says Goliath, entering.

"Kill that blackguard! Hang him, kill him!" screams Captain Blacksheep, rising with bleeding nose.

"I say, what's the row year?" asks the grenadier.

"Off with your cap, sir, before a lady!" calls out Bedford.

"Hoff with my cap! you be blo——"

But he said no more, for little Bedford jumped some two feet from the ground, and knocked the cap off, so that a cloud of ambrosial powder filled the room with violet odours. The immense frame of the giant shook at this insult: "I will be the death on you, you little beggar!" he grunted out; and was advancing to destroy Dick, just as I entered in the cloud which his head had raised.

"I'll knock the brains as well as the powder out of your ugly head!" says Bedford, springing at the poker. At which juncture I entered.

"What—what is this disturbance?" I say, advancing with an air of mingled surprise and resolution.

"You git out of the way till I knock his 'ead off!" roars Bulkeley.

"Take up your cap, sir, and leave the room," I say, still with the same elegant firmness.

"Put down that there poker, you coward!" bellows the monster on board-wages.

"Miss Prior!" I say (like a dignified hypocrite, as I own I was), "I hope no one has offered you a rudeness?" And I glare round, first at the knight of the bleeding nose, and then at his squire.

Miss Prior's face, as she replied to me, wore a look of awful scorn.

"Thank you, sir," she said, turning her head over her shoulder and looking at me with her grey eyes. "Thank you, Richard Bedford! God bless you! I shall ever be thankful to you, wherever I am." And the stately figure swept out of the room.

She had seen me behind that confounded statue, then, and I had not come to her! O torments and racks! O scorpions, fiends, and pitchforks! The face of Bedford, too (flashing with knightly gratitude anon as she spoke kind words to him and passed on), wore a look of scorn as he turned towards me, and then stood, his nostrils distended and breathing somewhat hard, glaring at his enemies, and still grasping his mace of battle.

When Elizabeth was gone, there was a pause of a moment, and then Blacksheep, taking his bleeding cambric from his nose, shrieks out, "Kill him, I say! A fellow that dares to hit one in my condition, and when I'm down! Bulkeley, you great hulking jackass! kill him, I say!"

"Jest let him put that there poker down, that's hall," growls Bulkeley.

"You're afraid, you great cowardly beast! You shall go, Mr. What-d'ye-call-'im—Mr. Bedford—you shall have the sack, sir, as sure as your name is what it is! I'll tell my brother-in-law everything; and as for that woman——"

"If you say a word against her, I'll cane you wherever I see you, Captain Baker!" I cry out.

"Who spoke to *you?*" says the Captain, falling back and scowling at me.

"Who hever told you to put *your* foot in?" says the squire.

I was in such a rage, and so eager to find an object on which I might wreak my fury, that I confess I plunged at this Bulkeley. I gave him two most violent blows on the waistcoat, which caused

him to double up with such frightful contortions, that Bedford burst out laughing; and even the Captain with the damaged eye and nose began to laugh too. Then, taking a lesson from Dick, as there was a fine shining dagger on the table, used for the cutting open of reviews and magazines, I seized and brandished this weapon, and I daresay would have sheathed it in the giant's bloated corpus, had he made any movement towards me. But he only called out, "hI'll be the death on you, you cowards! hI'll be the death of both on you!" and snatching up his cap from the carpet, walked out of the room.

"Glad you did that, though," says Baker, nodding his head. "Think I'd best pack up."

And now the Devil of Rage which had been swelling within me gave place to a worse devil—the Devil of Jealousy—and I turned on the Captain, who was also just about to slink away:—

"Stop!" I cried out—I screamed out, I may say.

"Who spoke to you, I should like to know? and who the dooce dares to speak to me in that sort of way?" says Clarence Baker, with a plentiful garnish of expletives, which need not be here inserted. But he stopped, nevertheless, and turned slouching round.

"You spoke just now of Miss Prior?" I said. "Have you anything against her?"

"What's that to you?" he asked.

"I am her oldest friend. I introduced her into this family. *Dare* you say a word against her?"

"Well, who the dooce has?"

"You knew her before?"

"Yes, I did, then."

"When she went by the name of Bellenden?"

"Of course I did. And what's that to you?" he screams out.

"I this day asked her to be my wife, sir! *That's* what it is to me!" I replied with severe dignity.

Mr. Clarence began to whistle. "Oh! if that's it—of course not!" he says.

The jealous demon writhed within me and rent me.

"You mean that there *is* something, then?" I asked, glaring at the young reprobate.

"No, I don't," says he, looking very much frightened. "No, there is nothin'. Upon my sacred honour, there isn't, that I know." (I was looking uncommonly fierce at this time, and, I must own, would rather have quarrelled with somebody than not.) "No, there is nothin' that I know. Ever so many years ago, you see, I used to go with Tom Papillion, Turkington, and two or three

fellows, to that theatre. Dolphin had it. And we used to go behind the scenes—and—and I own I had a row with her. And I was in the wrong. There now, I own I was. And she left the theatre. And she behaved quite right. And I was very sorry. And I believe she is as good a woman as ever stept now. And the father was a disreputable old man, but most honourable—I know he was. And there was a fellow in the Bombay service—a fellow by the name of Walker or Walkingham—yes, Walkingham; and I used to meet him at the 'Cave of Harmony,' you know; and he told me that she was as right as right could be. And he was doosidly cut up about leaving her. And he would have married her, I dessay, only for his father the General, who wouldn't stand it. And he was ready to hang himself when he went away. He used to drink awfully, and then he used to swear about her; and we used to chaff him, you know. Low vulgarish sort of man, he was; and a very passionate fellow. And if you're goin' to marry her, you know—of course, I ask your pardon, and that; and upon the honour of a gentleman I know nothin' against her. And I wish you joy and all that sort of thing. I do now, really now!" And so saying, the mean mischievous little monkey sneaked away, and clambered up to his own perch in his own bedroom.

Worthy Mrs. Bonnington, with a couple of her young ones, made her appearance at this juncture. She had a key, which gave her a free pass through the garden door, and brought her children for an afternoon's play and fighting with their little nephew and niece. Decidedly, Bessy did not bring up her young folks well. Was it that their grandmothers spoiled them, and undid the governess's work? Were those young people odious (as they often were) by nature, or rendered so by the neglect of their guardians? If Bessy had loved her charges more, would they not have been better? Had she a kind, loving, maternal heart? Ha! This thought,—this jealous doubt,—smote my bosom: and were she mine, and the mother of many possible little Batchelors, would she be kind to *them?* Would they be wilful, and selfish, and abominable little wretches, in a word, like these children? Nay—nay! Say that Elizabeth has but a cold heart; we cannot be all perfection. But, *per contra*, you must admit that, cold as she is, she does her duty. How good she has been to her own brothers and sisters: how cheerfully she has given away her savings to them: how admirably she has behaved to her mother, hiding the iniquities of that disreputable old schemer, and covering her improprieties with decent filial screens and pretexts. Her mother? *Ah! grands dieux!* You want to marry, Charles Batchelor, and you will have that greedy pauper for a mother-in-law; that fluffy Bluecoat boy,

those hobnailed taw-players, top-spinners, toffee-eaters, those underbred girls, for your brothers and sisters-in-law! They will be quartered upon you. You are so absurdly weak and good-natured —you know you are—that you will never be able to resist. Those boys will grow up; they will go out as clerks or shop-boys; get into debt and expect you to pay their bills: want to be articled to attorneys and so forth, and call upon you for the premium. Their mother will never be out of your house. She will ferret about in your drawers and wardrobes, filch your haberdashery, and cast greedy eyes on the very shirts and coats on your back, and calculate when she can get them for her boys. Those vulgar young miscreants will never fail to come and dine with you on a Sunday. They will bring their young linendraper or articled friends. They will draw bills on you, or give their own to money-lenders, and unless you take up those bills they will consider you a callous avaricious brute, and the heartless author of their ruin. The girls will come and practise on your wife's piano. *They* won't come to you on Sundays only; they will always be staying in the house. They will always be preventing a *tête-à-tête* between your wife and you. As they grow old, they will want her to take them out to tea-parties, and to give such entertainments, where they will introduce their odious young men. They will expect you to commit meannesses, in order to get theatre tickets for them from the newspaper editors of your acquaintance. You will have to sit in the back seat; to pay the cab to and from the play: to see glances and bows of recognition passing between them and dubious bucks in the lobbies: and to lend the girls your wife's gloves, scarfs, ornaments, smelling-bottles, and handkerchiefs, which of course they will never return. If Elizabeth is ailing from any circumstance, they will get a footing in your house, and she will be jealous of them. The ladies of your own family will quarrel with them of course; and very likely your mother-in-law will tell them a piece of her mind. And you bring this dreary certainty upon you, because, forsooth, you fall in love with a fine figure, a pair of grey eyes, and a head of auburn (not to say red) hair! O Charles Batchelor! in what a galley hast thou seated thyself, and what a family is crowded in thy boat!

All these thoughts are passing in my mind, as good Mrs. Bonnington is prattling to me—I protest I don't know about what. I think I caught some faint sentences about the Patagonian mission, the National schools, and Mr. Bonnington's lumbago; but I can't say for certain. I was busy with my own thoughts. I had asked the awful question—I was not answered. Bessy had even gone away in a huff about my want of gallantry, but I was easy on that score. As for Mr. Drencher, she had told me her sentiments regarding

him; "and though I am considerably older, yet," thought I, "I need not be afraid of *that* rival. But when she says *yes?* Oh dear! oh dear! *Yes* means Elizabeth—certainly, a brave young woman—but it means Mrs. Prior, and Gus, and Amelia Jane, and the whole of that dismal family." No wonder, with these dark thoughts crowding my mind, Mrs. Bonnington found me absent; and, as a comment upon some absurd reply of mine, said, "La! Mr. Batchelor, you must be crossed in love!" Crossed in love! It might be as well for some folks if they *were* crossed in love! At my age, and having loved madly, as I did, that party in Dublin, a man doesn't take the second fit by any means so strongly. Well! well! the die was cast, and I was there to bide the hazard. What can be the matter? I look pale and unwell, and had better see Mr. D. Thank you, my dear Mrs. Bonnington. I had a violent —a violent toothache last night—yes, toothache; and was kept awake, thank you. And there's nothing like having it out? and Mr. D. draws them beautifully, and has taken out six of your children's? It's better now; I daresay it will be better still, soon. I retire to my chamber: I take a book—can't read one word of it. I resume my tragedy. Tragedy? Bosh!

I suppose Mr. Drencher thought his yesterday's patient would be better for a little more advice and medicine, for he must pay a second visit to Shrublands on this day, just after the row with the Captain had taken place, and walked up to the upper regions, as his custom was. Very likely he found Mr. Clarence bathing his nose there, and prescribed for the injured organ. Certainly he knocked at the door of Miss Prior's schoolroom (the fellow was always finding a pretext for entering *that* apartment), and Master Bedford comes to me with a woebegone livid countenance, and a "Ha! ha! young Sawbones is up with her!"

"So, my poor Dick," I say, "I heard your confession as I was myself running in to rescue Miss P. from that villain."

"My blood was hup," groans Dick, "up, I beg your pardon. When I saw that young rascal lay a hand on her, I could not help flying at him. I would have hit him if he had been my own father. And I could not help saying what was on my mind. It would come out; I knew it would some day. I might as well wish for the moon as hope to get her. She thinks herself superior to me, and perhaps she is mistaken. But it's no use; she don't care for me; she don't care for anybody. Now the words are out, in course I mustn't stay here."

"You may get another place easily enough with your character, Bedford!"

But he shook his head. "I'm not disposed to black nobody

else's boots no more. I have another place. I have saved a bit of money. My poor old mother is gone, whom you used to be so kind to, Mr. B. I'm alone now. Confound that Sawbones, will he *never* come away? I'll tell you about my plans some day, sir, and I know you'll be so good as to help me." And away goes Dick, looking the picture of woe and despair.

Presently, from the upper rooms, Sawbones descends. I happened to be standing in the hall, you see, talking to Dick. Mr. Drencher scowls at me fiercely, and I suppose I return him haughty glance for glance. He hated me: I him: I liked him to hate me.

"How is your patient, Mr.—a—Drencher?" I ask.

"Trifling contusion of the nose—brown paper and vinegar," says the Doctor.

"Great powers! did the villain strike her on the nose?" I cry in terror.

"*Her*—whom?" says he.

"Oh—ah—yes—indeed; it's nothing," I say, smiling. The fact is I had forgotten about Baker in my natural anxiety for Elizabeth.

"I don't know what you mean by laughing, sir," says the red-haired practitioner. "But if you mean chaff, Mr. Batchelor, let me tell you I don't want chaff, and I won't have chaff!" and herewith exit Sawbones, looking black doses at me.

Jealous of me, think I, as I sink down in a chair in the morning-room, where the combat had just taken place. And so thou, too, art fever-caught, my poor physician! What a fascination this girl has! Here's the butler: here's the medical man: here am I: here is the Captain has been smitten—smitten on the nose. Has the gardener been smitten too, and is the page gnawing his buttons off for jealousy, and is Monsieur Bulkeley equally in love with her? I take up a review, and think over this, as I glance through its pages.

As I am lounging and reading, Monsieur Bulkeley himself makes his appearance, bearing in cloaks and packages belonging to his lady. "Have the goodness to take that cap off," I say coolly.

"*You* 'ave the goodness to remember that if hever I see you hout o' this 'ouse I'll punch your hugly 'ead off," says the monstrous menial. But I poise my paper-cutter, and he retires growling.

From despondency I pass to hope; and the prospect of marriage, which before appeared so dark to me, assumes a gayer hue. I have four hundred a year, and that house in Devonshire Street, Bloomsbury Square, of which the upper part will be quite big enough for us. If we have children, there is Queen Square for them to walk and play in. Several genteel families I know, who still

live in the neighbourhood, will come and see my wife, and we shall have a comfortable cosy little society, suited to our small means. The tradesmen in Lamb's Conduit Street are excellent, and the music at the Foundling always charming. I shall give up one of my clubs. The other is within an easy walk.

No: my wife's relations will *not* plague me. Bessy is a most sensible determined woman, and as cool a hand as I know. She will only see Mrs. Prior at proper (and, I trust, distant) intervals. Her brothers and sisters will learn to know their places, and not obtrude upon me or the company which I keep. My friends, who are educated people and gentlemen, will not object to visit me because I live over a shop (my ground-floor and spacious back premises in Devonshire Street are let to a German toy-warehouse). I shall add a hundred or two at least to my income by my literary labour; and Bessy, who has practised frugality all her life, and been a good daughter and a good sister, I know will prove a good wife, and, please Heaven! a good mother. Why, four hundred a year *plus* two hundred, is a nice little income. And my old College friend, Wigmore, who is just on the Bench? He will, he must get me a place—say three hundred a year. With nine hundred a year we can do quite well.

Love is full of elations and despondencies. The future, over which such a black cloud of doubt lowered a few minutes since, blushed a sweet rose-colour now. I saw myself happy, beloved, with a competence, and imagined myself reposing in the delightful garden of Red Lion Square on some summer evening, and half-a-dozen little Batchelors frisking over the flower-bespangled grass there.

After our little colloquy, Mrs. Bonnington not finding much pleasure in my sulky society, had gone to Miss Prior's room with her young folks, and as the door of the morning-room opened now and again, I could hear the dear young ones scuttling about the passages, where they were playing at horses and fighting and so forth. After a while good Mrs. B. came down from the schoolroom. "Whatever has happened, Mr. Batchelor?" she said to me, in her passage through the morning-room. "Miss Prior is very pale and absent. *You* are very pale and absent. Have you been courting her, you naughty man, and trying to supplant Mr. Drencher? There now, you turn as red as my ribbon! Ah! Bessy is a good girl, and *so* fond of my dear children. 'Ah, dear Mrs. Bonnington,' she says to me—but of course you won't tell Lady B.: it would make Lady B. perfectly furious. 'Ah!' says Miss P. to me, 'I wish, ma'am, that my little charges were like their dear little uncles and aunts—so exquisitely brought up!' Pop again wished to beat

his uncle. I wish—I wish Frederick would send that child to school! Miss P. owns that he is too much for her. Come, children, it is time to go to dinner." And, with more of this prattle, the good lady summons her young ones, who descend from the schoolroom with their nephew and niece.

Following nephew and niece, comes demure Miss Prior, to whom I fling a knowing glance, which says, plain as eyes can speak—Do, Elizabeth, come and talk for a little to your faithful Batchelor! She gives a sidelong look of intelligence, leaves a parasol and a pair of gloves on a table, accompanies Mrs. Bonnington and the young ones into the garden, sees the clergyman's wife and children disappear through the garden gate, and her own youthful charges engaged in the strawberry-beds; and, of course, returns to the morning-room for her parasol and gloves, which she had forgotten. There is a calmness about that woman—an easy dauntless dexterity, which frightens me—*ma parole d'honneur*. In that white breast is there a white marble stone in place of the ordinary cordial apparatus? Under the white velvet glove of that cool hand are there bones of cold steel?

"So, Drencher has again been here, Elizabeth?" I say.

She shrugs her shoulders. "To see that wretched Captain Baker. The horrid little man will die! He was not actually sober just now when he—when I—when you saw him. How I wish you had come sooner—to prevent that horrible, tipsy, disreputable quarrel! It makes me very very thoughtful, Mr. Batchelor. He will speak to his mother—to Mr. Lovel. I shall have to go away. I know I must."

"And don't you know where you can find a home, Elizabeth? Have the words I spoke this morning been so soon forgotten?"

"Oh! Mr. Batchelor! you spoke in a heat. You could not think seriously of a poor girl like me, so friendless and poor, with so many family ties. Pop is looking this way, please. To a man bred like you, what can I be?"

"You may make the rest of my life happy, Elizabeth!" I cry. "We are friends of such old—old date, that you know what my disposition is."

"Oh! indeed," says she, "it is certain that there never was a sweeter disposition or a more gentle creature." (Somehow I thought she said the words "gentle creature" with rather a sarcastic tone of voice.) "But consider your habits, dear sir. I remember how in Beak Street you used to be always giving, and, in spite of your income, always poor. You love ease and elegance; and having, I daresay, not too much for yourself now, would you encumber yourself with—with me and the expenses of a household? I shall always

regard you, esteem you, love you as the best friend I ever had, and —*voici venir la mère du vaurien.*"

Enter Lady Baker. "Do I interrupt a *tête-à-tête*, pray?" she asks.

"My benefactor has known me since I was a child, and befriended me since then," says Elizabeth, with simple kindness beaming in her look. "We were just speaking—I was just—ah! —telling him that my uncle has invited me most kindly to Saint Boniface, whenever I can be spared; and if you and the family go to the Isle of Wight this autumn, perhaps you will intercede with Mr. Lovel, and let me have a little holiday. Mary will take every charge of the children, and I do so long to see my dear aunt and cousins! And I was begging Mr. Batchelor to use his interest with you, and to entreat you to use *your* interest to get me leave. That was what our talk was about."

The deuce it was! I couldn't say No, of course; but I protest I had no idea until that moment that our conversation had been about Aunt and Uncle at Saint Boniface. Again came the horrible suspicion, the dreadful doubt—the chill as of a cold serpent crawling down my back—which had made me pause, and gasp, and turn pale, anon when Bessy and Captain Clarence were holding colloquy together. What *has* happened in this woman's life? *Do* I know all about her, or anything; or only just as much as she chooses? Oh, Batch —Batch! I suspect you are no better than an old gaby!

"And Mr. Drencher has just been here and seen your son," Bessy continues softly; "and he begs and entreats your Ladyship to order Captain Baker to be more prudent. Mr. D. says Captain Baker is shortening his life, indeed he is, by his carelessness."

There is Mr. Lovel coming from the City, and the children are running to their papa! And Miss Prior makes her patroness a meek curtsey, and demurely slides away from the room. With a sick heart I say to myself, "She has been—yes—humbugging is the word—humbugging Lady B. Elizabeth! Elizabeth! can it be possible thou art humbugging *me* too?"

Before Lovel enters, Bedford rapidly flits through the room. He looks as pale as a ghost. His face is awfully gloomy.

"Here's the governor come," Dick whispers to me. "It must all come hout now—out, I beg your pardon. So she's caught *you*, has she? I thought she would." And he grins a ghastly grin.

"What do you mean?" I ask, and I daresay turn rather red.

"I know all about it. I'll speak to you to-night, sir. Confound her! confound her!" and he doubles his knuckles into his eyes, and rushes out of the room over Buttons entering with the afternoon tea.

"What on earth's the matter, and why are you knocking the things about?" Lovel asks at dinner of his butler, who, indeed, acted as one distraught. A savage gloom was depicted on Bedford's usually melancholy countenance, and the blunders in his service were many. With his brother-in-law Lovel did not exchange many words. Clarence was not yet forgiven for his escapade two days previous. And when Lady Baker cried, "Mercy, child! what have you done to yourself?" and the Captain replied, "Knocked my face against a dark door—made my nose bleed," Lovel did not look up or express a word of sympathy. "If the fellow knocked his worthless head off, I should not be sorry," the widower murmured to me. Indeed, the tone of the Captain's voice, his *ton*, and his manners in general, were especially odious to Mr. Lovel, who could put up with the tyranny of women, but revolted against the vulgarity and assumption of certain men.

As yet nothing had been said about the morning's quarrel. Here we were all sitting with a sword hanging over our heads, smiling and chatting, and talking cookery, politics, the weather, and what not. Bessy was perfectly cool and dignified at tea. Danger or doubt did not seem to affect *her*. If she had been ordered for execution at the end of the evening she would have made the tea, played her Beethoven, answered questions in her usual voice, and glided about from one to another with her usual dignified calm, until the hour of decapitation came, when she would have made her curtsey, and gone out and had the amputation performed quite quietly and neatly. I admired her, I was frightened before her. The cold snake crept more than ever down my back as I meditated on her. I made such awful blunders at whist that even good Mrs. Bonnington lost her temper with her fourteen shillings. Miss Prior would have played her hand out, and never made a fault, you may be sure. She retired at her accustomed hour. Mrs. Bonnington had her glass of negus, and withdrew too. Lovel keeping his eyes sternly on the Captain, that officer could only get a little sherry and seltzer, and went to bed sober. Lady Baker folded Lovel in her arms, a process to which my poor friend very humbly submitted. Everybody went to bed, and no tales were told of the morning's doings. There was a respite, and no execution could take place till to-morrow at any rate. Put on thy nightcap, Damocles, and slumber for to-night at least. Thy slumbers will not be cut short by the awful Chopper of Fate.

Perhaps you may ask what need had *I* to be alarmed? Nothing could happen to me. I was not going to lose a governess's place. Well, if I must tell the truth, I had not acted with entire candour in the matter of Bessy's appointment. In recommending her to

Lovel and the late Mrs. L., I had answered for her probity, and so forth, with all my might. I had described the respectability of her family, her father's campaigns, her grandfather's (old Doctor Sargent's) celebrated sermons; and had enlarged with the utmost eloquence upon the learning and high character of her uncle, the Master of Boniface, and the deserved regard he bore his niece. But that part of Bessy's biography which related to the Academy I own I had not touched upon. *A quoi bon?* Would every gentleman or lady like to have everything told about him or her? I had kept the Academy dark then; and so had brave Dick Bedford the butler; and should that miscreant Captain reveal the secret, I knew there would be an awful commotion in the building. I should have to incur Lovel's not unjust reproaches for *suppressio veri*, and the anger of those two *viragines*, the grandmothers of Lovel's children. I was more afraid of the women than of him, though conscience whispered me that I had not acted quite rightly by my friend.

When, then, the bed-candles were lighted, and every one said good-night, "Oh! Captain Baker," say I gaily, and putting on a confoundedly hypocritical grin, "if you will come into my room, I will give you that book."

"What book?" says Baker.

"The book we were talking of this morning."

"Hang me, if I know what you mean," says he. And luckily for me, Lovel, giving a shrug of disgust, and a good-night to me, stalked out of the room, bed-candle in hand. No doubt, he thought his wretch of a brother-in-law did not well remember after dinner what he had done or said in the morning.

As I now had the Blacksheep to myself, I said calmly, "You are quite right. There was no talk about a book at all, Captain Baker. But I wished to see you alone, and impress upon you my earnest wish that everything which occurred this morning—mind, *everything*—should be considered as strictly private, and should be confided to *no person whatever*—you understand?—to no person."

"Confound me," Baker breaks out, "if I understand what you mean by your books and your 'strictly private.' I shall speak what I choose—hang me!"

"In that case, sir," I said, "will you have the goodness to send a friend of yours to my friend Captain Fitzboodle? I must consider the matter as personal between ourselves. You insulted—and, as I find now, for the second time—a lady whose relations to me you know. You have given neither to her, nor to me, the apology to which we are both entitled. You refuse even to promise to be silent regarding a painful scene which was occasioned by

your own brutal and cowardly behaviour; and you must abide by the consequences, sir! you must abide by the consequences!" And I glared at him over my flat candlestick.

"Curse me!—and hang me!—and," &c. &c. &c. he says, "if I know what all this is about. What the dooce do you talk to *me* about books, and about silence, and apologies, and sending Captain Fitzboodle to me? *I* don't want to see Captain Fitzboodle—great fat brute! *I* know him perfectly well."

"Hush!" say I, "here's Bedford." In fact, Dick appeared at this juncture, to close the house and put the lamps out.

But Captain Clarence only spoke or screamed louder. "What do I care about who hears me? That fellow insulted me already to-day, and I'd have pitched his life out of him, only I was down, and I'm so confounded weak and nervous, and just out of my fever —and—and hang it all! what are you driving at, Mr. What's-your-name?" And the wretched little creature cries almost as he speaks.

"Once for all, will you agree that the affair about which we spoke shall go no further?" I say, as stern as Draco.

"I shan't say anythin' about it. I wish you'd leave me alone, you fellows, and not come botherin'. I wish I could get a glass of brandy-and-water up in my bedroom. I tell you I can't sleep without it," whimpers the wretch.

"Sorry I laid hands on you, sir," says Bedford sadly. "It wasn't worth the while. Go to bed, and I'll get you something warm."

"Will you, though? I couldn't sleep without it. Do now—do now! and I won't say anythin'—I won't now—on the honour of a gentleman, I won't. Good-night, Mr. What-d'ye-call." And Bedford leads the helot to his chamber.

"I've got him in bed; and I've given him a dose; and I put some laudanum in it. He ain't been out. He has not had much to-day," says Bedford, coming back to my room, with his face ominously pale.

"You have given him laudanum?" I ask.

"*Sawbones* gave him some yesterday,—told me to give him a little—forty drops," growls Bedford.

Then the gloomy major-domo puts a hand into each waistcoat pocket, and looks at me. "You want to fight for her, do you, sir? Calling out, and that sort of game? Phoo!"—and he laughs scornfully.

"The little miscreant is too despicable, I own," say I, "and it's absurd for a peaceable fellow like me to talk about powder and shot at this time of day. But what could I do?"

"I say it's SHE ain't worth it," says Bedford, lifting up both clenched fists out of the waistcoat pockets.

"What do you mean, Dick?" I ask.

"She's humbugging you—she's humbugging me,—she's humbugging everybody," roars Dick. "Look here, sir!" and out of one of the clenched fists he flings a paper down on the table.

"What is it?" I ask. It's her handwriting. I see the neat trim lines on the paper.

"It's not to you; nor yet to me," says Bedford.

"Then how dare you read it, sir?" I ask, all of a tremble.

"It's to him. It's to Sawbones," hisses out Bedford. "Sawbones dropt it as he was getting into his gig; and I read it. *I* ain't going to make no bones about whether it's wrote to me or not. She tells him how you asked her to marry you." ("Ha!") "That's how I came to know it. And do you know what she calls you, and what *he* calls you,—that castor-hoil beast? And do you know what she says of you? That you hadn't pluck to stand by her to-day. There,—it's all down under her hand and seal. You may read it, or not, if you like. And if poppy or mandragora will medicine you to sleep afterwards, I just recommend you to take it. *I* shall go and get a drop out of the Captain's bottle—I shall."

And he leaves me, and the fatal paper on the table.

Now, suppose you had been in my case—would you, or would you not, have read the paper? Suppose there is some news—bad news—about the woman you love, will you, or will you not, hear it? Was Othello a rogue because he let Iago speak to him? There was the paper. It lay there glimmering under the light, with all the house quiet.

CHAPTER VI

CECILIA'S SUCCESSOR

MONSIEUR ET HONORÉ LECTEUR! I see, as perfectly as if you were sitting opposite to me, the scorn depicted on your noble countenance when you read my confession that I, Charles Batchelor, Esquire, did burglariously enter the premises of Edward Drencher, Esquire, M.R.C.S.I. (phew! the odious pestle-grinder, I never could bear him!), and break open, and read a certain letter his property. I may have been wrong, but I am candid. I tell my misdeeds; some fellows hold their tongues. Besides, my good man, consider the temptation, and the horrid insight into the paper which Bedford's report had already given me. Would *you* like to be told that the girl of your heart was playing fast and loose with it, had none of her own, or had given hers to another? I don't want to make a Mrs. Robin Gray of any woman, and merely because "her mither presses her sair" to marry against her will. "If Miss Prior," thought I, "prefers this lint-scraper to me, ought I to baulk her? He is younger, and stronger, certainly, than myself. Some people may consider him handsome. (By the way, what a remarkable thing it is about many women, that, in affairs of the heart, they don't seem to care or understand whether a man is a gentleman or not.) It may be it is my superior fortune and social station which may induce Elizabeth to waver in her choice between me and my bleeding, bolusing, tooth-drawing rival. If so, and I am only taken from mercenary considerations, what a pretty chance of subsequent happiness does either of us stand! Take the vaccinator, girl, if thou preferrest him! I know what it is to be crossed in love already. It's hard, but I can bear it! I ought to know, I must know, I *will* know what is in that paper!" So saying, as I pace round and round the table where the letter lies flickering white under the midnight taper. I stretch out my hand—I seize the paper—I——well, I own it—there—yes—I took it and I read it.

Or, rather, I may say, I read that part of IT which the bleeder and blisterer had flung down. It was but a fragment of a letter—a fragment—oh! how bitter to swallow! A lump of Epsom salt

could not have been more disgusting. It appeared (from Bedford's statement) that Æsculapius, on getting into his gig, had allowed this scrap of paper to whisk out of his pocket—the rest he read, no doubt, under the eyes of the writer. Very likely, during the perusal, he had taken and squeezed the false hand which wrote the lines. Very likely the first part of the *precious document* contained compliments to him—from the horrible context I judged so—compliments to that vendor of leeches and bandages, into whose heart I daresay I wished ten thousand lancets might be stuck, as I perused the False One's wheedling address to him! So ran the document. How well every word of it was engraved on my anguished heart! If page *three*, which I suppose was about the bit of the letter which I got, was as it was—what must pages *one* and *two* have been? The dreadful document began, then, thus:—

"——dear hair in the locket, which I shall *ever* wear for the sake of *him who gave it*" (dear hair! indeed—disgusting carrots! She should have been ashamed to call it "dear hair")—"for the sake of him who gave it and whose *bad temper* I shall pardon, because I think in spite of his faults he is a *little fond* of his poor Lizzie! Ah, Edward! how *could* you go on so the last time about poor Mr. B.! Can you imagine that I can ever have more than a filial regard for the kind old gentleman!" (*Il était question de moi, ma parole d'honneur.* I was the kind old gentleman!) "I have known him since my childhood. He was intimate in our family in earlier and happier days; made our house his home; and, I must say, was most kind to all of us children. If he has vanities, you naughty boy, is he the only one of his sex who is vain? Can you fancy that such an old creature (an *old muff*, as you call him, you wicked satirical man) could ever make an impression on my heart? No, sir!" (Aha! So I was an old muff, was I?) "Though I don't wish to make *you* vain too, or that other people should laugh at you, as you do at poor dear Mr. B., I think, sir, you need but look *in your glass* to see that you need not be afraid of such a rival as *that*. You fancy he is attentive to me? If you looked only a little angrily at him, he would fly back to London. To-day, when your *horrid little patient* did presume to offer to take my hand, when I boxed his little wicked ears and sent him *spinning* to the end of the room—poor Mr. Batch was so *frightened* that he did not *dare* to come into the room, and I saw him peeping behind a statue on the lawn, and he would not come in until the *servants arrived*. Poor man! We cannot all of us have courage like *a certain Edward*, who I know is as *bold as a lion*. Now, sir, you must not be quarrelling with that wretched little Captain for being rude. I

have shown him that I can very well *take care of myself*. I knew the *odious thing* the first moment I set eyes on him, though he had forgotten me. Years ago I met him, and I remember he was equally *rude and tips*——"

Here the letter was torn. Beyond "*tips*" it did not go. But that was enough, wasn't it? To this woman I had offered a gentle and manly, I may say a kind and tender heart—I had offered four hundred a year in funded property, besides my house in Devonshire Street, Bloomsbury—and she preferred *Edward*, forsooth, at the sign of the Gallipot: and may ten thousand pestles smash his brains!

You may fancy what a night I had after reading that scrap. I promise you I did not sleep much. I heard the hours toll as I kept vigil. I lay amidst shattered capitals, broken shafts of the tumbled palace which I had built in imagination—oh! how bright and stately! I sat amongst the ruins of my own happiness, surrounded by the murdered corpses of innocent-visioned domestic joys. Tick—tock! Moment after moment I heard on the clock the clinking footsteps of wakeful grief. I fell into a doze towards morning, and dreamed that I was dancing with Glorvina, when I woke with a start, finding Bedford arrived with my shaving-water and opening the shutters. When he saw my haggard face he wagged his head.

"You *have* read it, I see, sir," says he.

"Yes, Dick," groaned I out of bed, "I have swallowed it." And I laughed I may say a fiendish laugh. "And now I have taken it, not poppy nor mandragora, nor all the drowsy syrups in his shop (hang him!) will be able to medicine me to sleep for some time to come!"

"She has no heart, sir. I don't think she cares for t'other chap much," groans the gloomy butler. "She can't, after having known *us*"—and my companion in grief, laying down my hot-water jug, retreats.

I did not cut any part of myself with my razor. I shaved quite calmly. I went to the family at breakfast. My impression is I was sarcastic and witty. I smiled most kindly at Miss Prior when she came in. Nobody could have seen from my outward behaviour that anything was wrong within. I was an apple. Could you inspect the worm at my core? No, no. Somebody, I think old Baker, complimented me on my good looks. I was a smiling lake. Could you see on my placid surface, amongst my sheeny water-lilies, that a corpse was lying under my cool depths? "A bit of devilled chicken?" "No, thank you. By the way, Lovel, I think I must go to town to-day." "You'll come back to dinner, of course?" "Well—no." "Oh, stuff! You promised

me to-day and to-morrow. Robinson, Brown, and Jones are coming to-morrow, and you must be here to meet them." Thus we prattle on. I answer, I smile, I say, "Yes, if you please, another cup," or, "Be so good as to hand the muffin," or what not. But I am dead. I feel as if I am under ground, and buried. Life, and tea, and clatter, and muffins are going on, of course; and daisies spring and the sun shines on the grass whilst I am under it. Ah, dear me! it's very cruel: it's very very lonely: it's very odd! I don't belong to the world any more. I have done with it. I am shelved away. But my spirit returns and flitters through the world, which it has no longer anything to do with: and my ghost, as it were, comes and smiles at my own tombstone. Here lies Charles Batchelor, the Unloved One. Oh! alone, alone, alone! Why, Fate! didst thou ordain that I should be companionless? Tell me where the Wandering Jew is, that I may go and sit with him. Is there any place at a lighthouse vacant? Who knows where is the Island of Juan Fernandez? Engage me a ship and take me there at once. Mr. R. Crusoe, I think? My dear Robinson, have the kindness to hand me over your goatskin cap, breeches, and umbrella. Go home, and leave *me* here. Would you know who is the solitariest man on earth? That man am I. Was that cutlet which I ate at breakfast anon, was that lamb which frisked on the mead last week (beyond yon wall where the unconscious cucumber lay basking which was to form his sauce)—I say was that lamb made so tender that I might eat him? And my heart, then? Poor heart! wert thou so softly constituted only that women might stab thee? So I am a Muff, am I? And she will always wear a lock of his "dear hair," will she? Ha! ha! The men on the omnibus looked askance as they saw me laugh. They thought it was from Hanwell, not Putney, I was escaping. Escape? Who can escape? I went into London. I went to the Clubs. Jawkins, of course, was there; and my impression is that he talked as usual. I took another omnibus, and went back to Putney. "I will go back and revisit my grave," I thought. It is said that ghosts loiter about their former haunts a good deal when they are first dead; flit wistfully among their old friends and companions, and, I daresay, expect to hear a plenty of conversation and friendly tearful remark about themselves. But suppose they return, and find nobody talking of them at all? Or suppose, Hamlet (Père, and Royal Dane) comes back and finds Claudius and Gertrude very comfortable over a piece of cold meat, or what not? Is the late gentleman's present position as a ghost a very pleasant one? Crow, Cocks! Quick, Sundawn! Open, Trap-door! *Allons:* it's best to pop underground again. So I am a Muff, am I? What

a curious thing that walk up the hill to the house was! What a different place Shrublands was yesterday to what it is to-day! Has the sun lost its light, and the flowers their bloom, and the joke its sparkle, and the dish its savour? Why, bless my soul! what is Lizzie herself—only an ordinary woman—freckled certainly—incorrigibly dull, and without a scintillation of humour; and you mean to say, Charles Batchelor, that your heart once beat about *that* woman? Under the intercepted letter of that cold assassin, my heart had fallen down dead, irretrievably dead. I remember, *à propos* of the occasion of my first death, that perpetrated by Glorvina—on my second visit to Dublin—with what a strange sensation I walked under some trees in the Phœnix Park beneath which it had been my custom to meet my False One Number 1. There were the trees—there were the birds singing—there was the bench on which we used to sit—the same, but how different! The trees had a different foliage, exquisite amaranthine; the birds sang a song paradisiacal; the bench was a bank of roses and fresh flowers, which young Love twined in fragrant chaplets around the statue of Glorvina. Roses and fresh flowers? Rheumatisms and flannel-waistcoats, you silly old man! Foliage and Song? O namby-pamby driveller! A statue?—a doll, thou twaddling old dullard!—a doll with carmine cheeks, and a heart stuffed with bran—I say, on the night preceding that ride to and from Putney, I had undergone death—in that omnibus I had been carried over to t'other side of the Stygian shore. I returned but as a passionless ghost, remembering my life-days, but not feeling any more. Love was dead, Elizabeth! Why, the Doctor came, and partook freely of lunch, and I was not angry. Yesterday I called him names, and hated him, and was jealous of him. To-day I felt no rivalship; and no envy at his success; and no desire to supplant him. No—I swear—not the slightest wish to make Elizabeth mine if she would. I might have cared for her yesterday—yesterday I had a heart. Psha! my good sir or madam. You sit by me at dinner. Perhaps you are handsome, and use your eyes. Ogle away. Don't baulk yourself, pray. But if you fancy I care a threepenny-piece about you—or for your eyes—or for your bonny brown hair—or for your sentimental remarks, sidelong warbled—or for your praise to (not of) my face—or for your satire behind my back—ah me!—how mistaken you are! *Peine perdue, ma chère dame!* The digestive organs are still in good working order—but the heart! *Caret.*

I was perfectly civil to Mr. Drencher, and, indeed, wonder to think how in my irritation I had allowed myself to apply (mentally) any sort of disagreeable phrases to a most excellent and deserving and good-looking young man, who is beloved by

the poor, and has won the just confidence of an extensive circle of patients. I made no sort of remark to Miss Prior, except about the weather and the flowers in the garden. I was bland, easy, rather pleasant, not too high-spirited, you understand.—No: I vow you could not have seen a nerve wince, or the slightest alteration in my demeanour. I helped the two old dowagers; I listened to their twaddle; I gaily wiped up with my napkin three-quarters of a glass of sherry which Popham flung over my trousers. I would defy you to know that I had gone through the ticklish operation of an excision of the heart a few hours previously. Heart—pooh! I saw Miss Prior's lip quiver. Without a word between us, she knew perfectly well that all was over as regarded her late humble servant. *She* winced once or twice. While Drencher was busy with his plate, the grey eyes cast towards me interjectional looks of puzzled entreaty. *She*, I say, winced; and I give you my word I did not care a fig whether she was sorry, or pleased, or happy, or going to be hanged. And I can't give a better proof of my utter indifference about the matter, than the fact that I wrote two or three copies of verses descriptive of my despair. They appeared, you may perhaps remember, in one of the annuals of those days, and were generally attributed to one of the most sentimental of our young poets. I remember the reviews said they were "replete with emotion," "full of passionate and earnest feeling," and so forth. Feeling, indeed!—ha! ha! "Passionate outbursts of a grief-stricken heart!"—Passionate scrapings of a fiddle-stick, my good friend. "Lonely" of course rhymes with "only," and "gushes" with "blushes," and "despair" with "hair," and so on. Despair is perfectly compatible with a good dinner, I promise you. Hair is false: hearts are false. Grapes may be sour, but claret is good, my masters. Do you suppose I am going to cry my eyes out, because Chloe's are turned upon Strephon? If you find any whimpering in mine, may they never wink at a bee's-wing again.

When the Doctor rose presently, saying he would go and see the gardener's child, who was ill, and casting longing looks at Miss Prior, I assure you I did not feel a tittle of jealousy, though Miss Bessy actually followed Mr. Drencher on to the lawn, under the pretext of calling back Miss Cissy, who had run thither without her bonnet.

"Now, Lady Baker, which was right? you or I?" asks bonny Mrs. Bonnington, wagging her head towards the lawn where this couple of innocents were disporting.

"You thought there was an affair between Miss Prior and the medical gentleman," I say, smiling. "It was no secret, Mrs. Bonnington."

"Yes, but there were others who were a little smitten in that

quarter too," says Lady Baker; and she in turn wags *her* old head towards me.

"You mean me?" I answer, as innocent as a new-born babe. "I am a burnt child, Lady Baker; I have been at the fire, and am already thoroughly done, thank you. One of your charming sex jilted me some years ago; and once is quite enough, I am much obliged to you."

This I said, not because it was true; in fact, it was the reverse of truth; but if I chose to lie about my own affairs, pray, why not? And though a strictly truth-telling man generally, when I do lie, I promise you I do it boldly and well.

"If, as I gather from Mrs. Bonnington, Mr. Drencher and Miss Prior like each other, I wish my old friend joy. I wish Mr. Drencher joy with all my heart. The match seems to me excellent. He is a deserving, a clever, and a handsome young fellow; and I am sure, ladies, you can bear witness to *her* goodness, after all you have known of her."

"My dear Batchelor," says Mrs. Bonnington, still smiling and winking, "I don't believe one single word you say—not one single word!" And she looks infinitely pleased as she speaks.

"Oh!" cries Lady Baker, "my good Mrs. Bonnington, you are always match-making — don't contradict me. You know you thought——"

"Oh, please don't," cries Mrs. B.

"I will. She thought, Mr. Batchelor, she actually thought that our son, that my Cecilia's husband, was smitten by the governess. I should like to have seen him dare!" and her flashing eyes turn towards the late Mrs. Lovel's portrait, with its faded simper leering over the harp. "The idea that any woman could succeed that angel, indeed!"

"Indeed, I don't envy her," I said.

"You don't mean, Batchelor, that my Frederick would not make any woman happy!" cries the Bonnington. "He's only seven-and-thirty, very young for his age, and the most affectionate of creatures. I am surprised, and it's most cruel, and most unkind of you, to say that you don't envy any woman that marries my boy!"

"My dear good Mrs. Bonnington, you quite misapprehend me," I remark.

"Why, when his late wife was alive," goes on Mrs. B., sobbing, "you know with what admirable sweetness and gentleness he bore her—her—bad temper—excuse me, Lady Baker!"

"Oh, pray, abuse my departed angel!" cries the Baker; "say that your son should marry and forget her—say that those darlings

should be made to forget their mother. She was a woman of birth, and a woman of breeding, and a woman of family, and the Bakers came in with the Conqueror, Mrs. Bonnington——"

"I think I heard of one in the Court of Pharaoh," I interposed.

"And to say that a Baker is not worthy of a Lovel is *pretty* news indeed! Do you hear *that*, Clarence?"

"Hear what, ma'am?" says Clarence, who enters at this juncture. "You're speakin' loud enough—though blesht if I hear two sh-shyllables."

"You wretched boy, you have been smoking!"

"Shmoking—haven't I?" says Clarence with a laugh; "and I've been at the 'Five Bells,' and I've been having a game of billiards with an old friend of mine," and he lurches towards a decanter.

"Ah! don't drink any more, my child!" cries the mother.

"I'm as sober as a judge, I tell you. You leave so precious little in the bottle at dinner, that I must get it when I can, mustn't I, Batchelor, old boy? We had a row yesterday, hadn't we? No, it was sugar-baker. I'm not angry—you're not angry. Bear no malish. Here's your health, old boy!"

The unhappy gentleman drank his bumper of sherry, and, tossing his hair off his head, said—"Where's the governess—where's Bessy Bellenden? Who's that kickin' me under the table, I say?"

"Where is who?" asks his mother.

"Bessy Bellenden—the governess—that's her real name. Known her these ten years. Used to dansh at Prinsh's Theatre. Remember her in the corps-de-ballet. Ushed to go behind the shenes. Dooshid pretty girl!" maunders out the tipsy youth; and as the unconscious subject of his mischievous talk enters the room, again he cries out, "Come and sit by me, Bessy Bellenden, I say!"

The matrons rose with looks of horror in their faces. "A ballet-dancer!" cries Mrs. Bonnington. "A ballet-dancer!" echoes Lady Baker. "Young woman, is this true?"

"The Bulbul and the Roshe—hay?" laughs the Captain. "Don't you remember you and Fosbery in blue and shpangles? Always all right, though, Bellenden was. Fosbery washn't: but Bellenden was. Give you every credit for that, Bellenden. Boxsh my ears. Bear no malish—no—no—malish! Get some more sherry, you—whatsh your name—Bedford, butler—and I'll pay you the money I owe you." And he laughs his wild laugh, utterly unconscious of the effect he is producing. Bedford stands staring at him as pale as death. Poor Miss Prior is as white as marble. Wrath, terror, and wonder are in the countenances of the dowagers. It is an awful scene!

"Mr. Batchelor knows that it was to help my family I did it," says the poor governess.

"Yes, by George! and nobody can say a word against her," bursts in Dick Bedford, with a sob; "and she is as honest as any woman here."

"Pray, who told you to put your oar in?" cries the tipsy Captain.

"And you knew that this person was on the stage, and you introduced her into my son's family? Oh, Mr. Batchelor, Mr. Batchelor, I didn't think it of you! Don't speak to me, miss!" cries the flurried Bonnington.

"You brought this woman to the children of my adored Cecilia?" calls out the other dowager. "Serpent, leave the room! Pack your trunks, viper! and quit the house this instant. Don't touch her, Cissy. Come to me, my blessing. Go away, you horrid wretch!"

"She ain't a horrid wretch; and when I was ill she was very good to us," breaks in Pop, with a roar of tears: "and you shan't go, Miss Prior—my dear pretty Miss Prior. You shan't go!" and the child rushes up to the governess, and covers her neck with tears and kisses.

"Leave her, Popham, my darling blessing!—leave that woman!" cries Lady Baker.

"I won't, you old beast!—and she sha-a-an't go. And I wish you was dead—and, my dear, you shan't go, and pa shan't let you!" shouts the boy.

"Oh, Popham, if Miss Prior has been naughty, Miss Prior must go!" says Cecilia, tossing up her head.

"Spoken like my daughter's child!" cries Lady Baker: and little Cissy, having flung her little stone, looks as if she had performed a very virtuous action.

"God bless you, Master Pop—you are a trump, you are!" says Mr. Bedford.

"Yes, that I am, Bedford; and she shan't go, shall she?" cries the boy.

But Bessy stooped down sadly and kissed him. "Yes, I must, dear," she said.

"Don't touch him! Come away, sir! Come away from her this moment!" shrieked the two mothers.

"I nursed him through the scarlet fever, when his own mother would not come near him," says Elizabeth gently.

"I'm blest if she didn't," sobs Bedford—"and—bub—bub—bless you, Master Pop!"

"That child is wicked enough, and headstrong enough, and rude

enough already!" exclaims Lady Baker. "I desire, young woman, you will not pollute him further!"

"That's a hard word to say to an honest woman, ma'am," says Bedford.

"Pray, miss, are you engaged to the butler, too?" hisses out the dowager.

"There's very little the matter with Barnet's child — only teeth—— What on earth has happened? My dear Lizzie—my dear Miss Prior—what is it?" cries the Doctor, who enters from the garden at this juncture.

"Nothing has happened, only this young woman has appeared in a new *character*," says Lady Baker. "My son has just informed us that Miss Prior danced upon the stage, Mr. Drencher; and if you think such a person is a fit companion for your mother and sisters, who attend a place of Christian worship, I believe—I wish you joy."

"Is this—is this—true?" asks the Doctor, with a look of bewilderment.

"Yes, it is true," sighs the girl.

"And you never told me, Elizabeth?" groans the Doctor.

"She's as honest as any woman here," calls out Bedford. "She gave all the money to her family."

"It wasn't fair not to tell me. It wasn't fair," sobs the Doctor. And he gives her a ghastly parting look, and turns his back.

"I say, you—Hi! What-d'you-call-'im? Sawbones!" shrieks out Captain Clarence. "Come back, I say. She's all right, I say. Upon my honour, now, she's all right."

"Miss P. shouldn't have kept this from me. My mother and sisters are Dissenters, and very strict. I couldn't ask a party into my family who has been—who has been——I wish you good morning," says the Doctor, and stalks away.

"And now, will you please to get your things ready, and go too?" continues Lady Baker. "My dear Mrs. Bonnington, you think——"

"Certainly, certainly, she must go!" cries Mrs. Bonnington.

"Don't go till Lovel comes home, miss. *These* ain't your mistresses. Lady Baker don't pay your salary. If you go, I go, too. There!" calls out Bedford, and mumbles something in her ear about "the end of the world."

"You go, too; and a good riddance, you insolent brute!" exclaims the dowager.

"Oh, Captain Clarence! you have made a pretty morning's work," I say.

"I don't know what the dooce all the sherry—all the shinty's

about," says the Captain, playing with the empty decanter. "Gal's a very good gal—pretty gal. If she choosesh dansh shport her family, why the doosh shouldn't she dansh shport a family?"

"That is exactly what I recommend this person to do," says Lady Baker, tossing up her head. "And now I will thank you to leave the room. Do you hear?"

As poor Elizabeth obeyed this order, Bedford darted after her; and I know ere she had gone five steps he had offered her his savings and everything he had. She might have had mine yesterday. But she had deceived me. She had played fast and loose with me. She had misled me about this Doctor. I could trust her no more. My love of yesterday was dead, I say. That vase was broken which never could be mended. She knew all was over between us. She did not once look at me as she left the room.

The two dowagers—one of them, I think, a little alarmed at her victory—left the house, and for once went away in the same barouche. The young maniac who had been the cause of the mischief staggered away, I know not whither.

About four o'clock, poor little Pinhorn, the children's maid, came to me, well-nigh choking with tears, as she handed me a letter. "She's goin' away—and she saved both them children's lives, she did. And she've wrote to you, sir. And Bedford's a-goin'. And I'll give warnin', I will, too!" And the weeping handmaiden retires, leaving me, perhaps somewhat frightened, with the letter in my hand.

"Dear sir," she said—"I may write you a line of thanks and farewell. I shall go to my mother. I shall soon find another place. Poor Bedford, who has a generous heart, told me that he had given you a letter of mine to Mr. D——. I saw this morning that you knew everything. I can only say now that for all your long kindnesses and friendship to my family I am always your sincere and grateful—E. P."

Yes: that was all. I think she *was* grateful. But she had not been candid with me, nor with the poor surgeon. I had no anger: far from it: a great deal of regard and goodwill, nay admiration, for the intrepid girl who had played a long hard part very cheerfully and bravely. But my foolish little flicker of love had blazed up and gone out in a day; I knew that she never could care for me. In that dismal wakeful night, after reading the letter, I had thought her character and story over, and seen to what a life of artifice and dissimulation necessity had compelled her. I did not blame her. In such circumstances, with such a family, how could she be frank and open? Poor thing! poor thing! Do we know anybody? Ah! dear me, we are most of us

very lonely in the world. You who have any who love you, cling to them, and thank God. I went into the hall towards evening: her poor trunks and packages were there, and the little nursery-maid weeping over them. The sight unmanned me; and I believe I cried myself. Poor Elizabeth! And with these small chests you recommence your life's lonely voyage! I gave the girl a couple of sovereigns. She sobbed a God bless me! and burst out crying more desperately than ever. Thou hast a kind heart, little Pinhorn!

"'Miss Prior—to be called for.' Whose trunks are these?" says Lovel, coming from the City. The dowagers drove up at the same moment.

"Didn't you see us from the omnibus, Frederick?" cries her Ladyship coaxingly. "We followed behind you all the way!"

"We were in the barouche, my dear," remarks Mrs. Bonnington rather nervously.

"Whose trunks are these?—what's the matter?—and what's the girl crying for?" asks Lovel.

"Miss Prior is a-going away," sobs Pinhorn.

"Miss Prior going? Is this your doing, my Lady Baker?—or yours, mother?" the master of the house says sternly.

"She is going, my love, because she cannot stay in this family," says mamma.

"That woman is no fit companion for my angel's children, Frederick!" cries Lady B.

"That person has deceived us all, my love!" says mamma.

"Deceived?—how? Deceived whom?" continues Mr. Lovel, more and more hotly.

"Clarence, love! come down, dear! Tell Mr. Lovel everything. Come down and tell him this moment," cries Lady Baker to her son, who at this moment appears on the corridor which was round the hall.

"What's the row now, pray?" And Captain Clarence descends, breaking his shins over poor Elizabeth's trunks, and calling down on them his usual maledictions.

"Tell Mr. Lovel where you saw that—that person, Clarence. Now, sir, listen to my Cecilia's brother!"

"Saw her—saw her in blue and spangles, in the 'Rose and the Bulbul,' at the Prince's Theatre—and a doosid nice-looking girl she was too!" says the Captain.

"There, sir!"

"There, Frederick!" cry the matrons in a breath.

"And what then?" asks Lovel.

"Mercy! you ask, What then, Frederick? Do you know

what a theatre is? Tell Frederick what a theatre is, Mr. Batchelor, and that my grandchildren must not be educated by——"

"My grandchildren—my Cecilia's children," shrieks the other, "must not be pol-luted by——"

"Silence!" I say. "Have you a word against her—have you, pray, Baker?"

"No. 'Gad! I never said a word against her," says the Captain. "No, hang me, you know—but——"

"But suppose I knew the fact the whole time?" asks Lovel, with rather a blush on his cheek. "Suppose I knew that she danced to give her family bread? Suppose I knew that she toiled and laboured to support her parents, and brothers and sisters? Suppose I know that out of her pittance she has continued to support them? Suppose I know that she watched my own children through fever and danger? For these reasons I must turn her out of doors, must I? No, by Heaven! No!—Elizabeth!—Miss Prior!—Come down!—Come here, I beg you!"

The governess, arrayed as for departure, at this moment appeared on the corridor running round the hall. As Lovel continued to speak very loud and resolute, she came down looking deadly pale.

Still much excited, the widower went up to her and took her hand. "Dear Miss Prior!" he said—"dear Elizabeth! you have been the best friend of me and mine. You tended my wife in illness, you took care of my children in fever and danger. You have been an admirable sister, daughter in your own family—and for this, and for these benefits conferred upon us, my relatives—my mother-in-law—would drive you out of my doors! It shall not be!—by heavens, it shall not be!"

You should have seen little Bedford sitting on the governess's box, shaking his fist, and crying "Hurrah!" as his master spoke. By this time the loud voices and the altercation in the hall had brought a half-dozen of servants from their quarters into the hall. "Go away, all of you!" shouts Lovel; and the domestic *posse* retires, Bedford being the last to retreat, and nodding approval at his master as he backs out of the room.

"You are very good, and kind, and generous, sir," says the pale Elizabeth, putting a handkerchief to her eyes. "But without the confidence of these ladies, I must not stay, Mr. Lovel. God bless you for your goodness to me. I must, if you please, return to my mother."

The worthy gentleman looked fiercely round at the two elder women, and again seizing the governess's hand, said—"Elizabeth! dear Elizabeth! I implore you not to go! If you love the children——"

"Oh, sir!" (A cambric veil covers Miss Prior's emotion, and the expression of her face, on this ejaculation.)

"If you love the children," gasps out the widower, "stay with them. If you have a regard for—for their father"—(Timanthes, where is thy pocket-handkerchief?)—"remain in this house, with such a title as none can question. Be the mistress of it."

"His mistress—and before me!" screams Lady Baker. "Mrs. Bonnington, this depravity is monstrous!"

"Be my wife, dear Elizabeth!" the widower continues. "Continue to watch over the children, who shall be motherless no more."

"Frederick! Frederick! haven't they got *us?*" shrieks one of the old ladies.

"Oh, my poor dear Lady Baker!" says Mrs. Bonnington.

"Oh, my poor dear Mrs. Bonnington!" says Lady Baker.

"Frederick, listen to your mother," implores Mrs. Bonnington.

"To your mothers," sobs Lady Baker.

And they both go down on their knees, and I heard a boohoo of a guffaw behind the green-baized servants' door, where I have no doubt Monsieur Bedford was posted.

"Ah, Batchelor! dear Batchelor, speak to him!" cries good Mrs. Bonny. "We are praying this child, Batchelor—this child whom you used to know at College, and when he was a good gentle obedient boy. You have influence with my poor Frederick. Exert it for his heartbroken mother's sake; and you shall have my bubble-ubble-essings, you shall."

"My dear good lady," I exclaim—not liking to see the kind soul in grief.

"Send for Doctor Straightwaist! Order him to pause in his madness," cries Baker; "or it is I, Cecilia's mother, the mother of that murdered angel, that shall go mad."

"Angel? *Allons!*" I say. "Since his widowhood, you have never given the poor fellow any peace. You have been for ever quarrelling with him. You took possession of his house; bullied his servants; spoiled his children—you did, Lady Baker."

"Sir," cries her Ladyship, "you are a low, presuming, vulgar man! Clarence, beat this rude man!"

"Nay," I say, "there must be no more quarrelling to-day. And I am sure Captain Baker will not molest me. Miss Prior, I am delighted that my old friend should have found a woman of good sense, good conduct, good temper—a woman who has had many trials, and borne them with very great patience—to take charge of him, and make him happy. I congratulate you both. Miss Prior has borne poverty so well that I am certain she will bear good fortune, for it

is good fortune to become the wife of such a loyal, honest, kindly gentleman as Frederick Lovel."

After such a speech as that, I think I may say, *liberavi animam.* Not one word of complaint, you see, not a hint about "Edward," not a single sarcasm, though I might have launched some terrific shots out of my quiver, and have made Lovel and his bride-elect writhe before me. But what is the need of spoiling sport? Shall I growl out of my sulky manger because my comrade gets the meat? Eat it, happy dog! and be thankful. Would not that bone have choked me if I had tried it? Besides, I am accustomed to disappointment. Other fellows get the prizes which I try for. I am used to run second in the dreary race of love. Second? Psha! Third, Fourth. *Que sais-je?* There was the Bombay captain in Bess's early days. There was Edward. Here is Frederick. Go to, Charles Batchelor; repine not at fortune: but be content to be Batchelor still. My sister has children. I will be an uncle, a parent to them. Isn't Edward of the scarlet whiskers distanced? Has not poor Dick Bedford lost the race—poor Dick, who never had a chance, and is the best of us all? Besides, what fun it is to see Lady Baker deposed: think of Mrs. Prior coming in and reigning over her! The purple-faced old fury of a Baker, never will she bully, and rage, and trample more. She must pack up her traps and be off. I know she must. I *can* congratulate Lovel sincerely, and that's the fact.

And here at this very moment, and as if to add to the comicality of the scene, who should appear but mother-in-law No. 2, Mrs. Prior, with her Bluecoat boy, and two or three of her children, who had been invited, or had invited themselves, to drink tea with Lovel's young ones, as their custom was whenever they could procure an invitation. Master Prior had a fine "copy" under his arm, which he came to show to his patron Lovel. His mamma, entirely ignorant of what had happened, came fawning in with her old poke-bonnet, her old pocket, that vast depository of all sorts of stores, her old umbrella, and her usual dreary smirk. She made her obeisance to the matrons,—she led up her Bluecoat boy to Mr. Lovel, in whose office she hoped to find a clerk's place for her lad, on whose very coat and waistcoat she had designs whilst they were yet on his back: and she straightway began business with the dowagers—

"My Lady, I hope your Ladyship is quite well?" (a curtsey). "Dear kind Mrs. Bonnington! I came to pay my duty to you, mum. This is Louisa, my Lady, the great girl for whom your Ladyship so kindly promised the gown. And this is my little girl, Mrs. Bonnington, mum, please; and this is my big Blue. Go and

speak to dear kind Mr. Lovel, Gus, our dear good friend and protector,—the son and son-in-law of these dear ladies. Look, sir, he has brought his copy to show you; and it's creditable to a boy of his age, isn't it, Mr. Batchelor? You can say, who know so well what writing is, and my kind services to you, sir—and—Elizabeth, Lizzie, my dear! where's your spectacles, you—you——"

Here she stopped, and looking alarmed at the group, at the boxes, at the blushing Lovel, at the pale countenance of the governess, "Gracious goodness!" she said, "what has happened? Tell me, Lizzie, what is it?"

"Is this collusion, pray?" says ruffled Mrs. Bonnington.

"Collusion, dear Mrs. Bonnington?"

"Or insolence?" bawls out my Lady Baker.

"Insolence, your Ladyship? What—what is it? What are these boxes—Lizzie's boxes? Ah!" the mother broke out with a scream, "you've not sent the poor girl away? Oh! my poor child —my poor children!"

"The Prince's Theatre has come out, Mrs. Prior," here said I.

The mother clasps her meagre hands. "It wasn't the darling's fault. It was to help her poor father in poverty. It was I who forced her to it. Oh, ladies! ladies!—don't take the bread out of the mouth of these poor orphans!"—and genuine tears rained down her yellow cheeks.

"Enough of this," says Mr. Lovel haughtily. "Mrs. Prior, your daughter is not going away. Elizabeth has promised to stay with me, and never to leave me—as governess no longer, but as——" and here he takes Miss Prior's hand.

"His wife! Is this—is this true, Lizzie?" gasped the mother.

"Yes, mamma," meekly said Miss Elizabeth Prior.

At this the old woman flung down her umbrella, and uttering a fine scream, folds Elizabeth in her arms, and then runs up to Lovel! "My son! my son!" says she (Lovel's face was not bad, I promise you, at this salutation and salute). "Come here, children!—come, Augustus, Fanny, Louisa, kiss your dear brother, children! And where are yours, Lizzie? Where are Pop and Cissy? Go and look for your little nephew and niece, dears: Pop and Cissy in the schoolroom, or in the garden, dears. They will be your nephew and niece now. Go and fetch them, I say."

As the young Priors filed off, Mrs. Prior turned to the two other matrons, and spoke to them with much dignity: "Most hot weather, your Ladyship, I'm sure! Mr. Bonnington must find it very hot for preaching, Mrs. Bonnington? Lor'! there's that little wretch beating my Johnny on the stairs. Have done, Pop, sir! How ever shall we make those children agree, Elizabeth?"

Quick, come to me, some skilful delineator of the British dowager, and draw me the countenances of Lady Baker and Mrs. Bonnington.

"I call this a jolly game, don't you, Batchelor, old boy?" remarks the Captain to me. "Lady Baker, my dear, I guess your Ladyship's nose is out of joint."

"O Cecilia—Cecilia! don't you shudder in your grave?" cries Lady B. "Call my people, Clarence—call Bulkeley—call my maid! Let me go, I say, from this house of horror!" and the old lady dashed into the drawing-room, where she uttered I know not what incoherent shrieks and appeals before that calm, glazed, simpering portrait of the departed Cecilia.

Now this is a truth, for which I call Lovel, his lady, Mrs. Bonnington, and Captain Clarence Baker as witnesses. Well, then, whilst Lady B. was adjuring the portrait, it is a fact that a string of Cecilia's harp—which has always been standing in the corner of the room under its shroud of Cordovan leather—a string, I say, of Cecilia's harp cracked, and went off with a loud *bong*, which struck terror into all beholders. Lady Baker's agitation at the incident was awful; I do not like to describe it—not having any wish to say anything tragic in this narrative—though that I *can* write tragedy, plays of mine (of which envious managers never could be got to see the merit) I think will prove, when they appear in my posthumous works.

Baker has always averred that at the moment when the harp-string broke, her heart broke too. But as she lived for many years, and may be alive now for what I know; and as she borrowed money repeatedly from Lovel—he must be acquitted of the charge which she constantly brings against him of hastening her own death, and murdering his first wife Cecilia. "The harp that once in Tara's halls" used to make such a piteous feeble thrumming, has been carted off I know not whither; and Cecilia's portrait, though it has been removed from the post of honour (where, you conceive, under present circumstances it would hardly be *à propos*), occupies a very reputable position in the pink room upstairs which that poor young Clarence inhabited during my visit to Shrublands.

All the house has been altered. There's a fine organ in the hall, on which Elizabeth performs sacred music very finely. As for *my* old room, I will trouble you to smoke *there* under the present government. It is a library now, with many fine and authentic pictures of the Lovel family hanging up in it, the English branch of the house with the wolf crest, and *Gare à la louve* for the motto, and a grand posthumous portrait of a Portuguese officer (Gandish), Elizabeth's late father.

As for dear old Mrs. Bonnington, she, you may be sure, would be easily reconciled to any live mortal who was kind to her, and any plan which should make her son happy; and Elizabeth has quite won her over. Mrs. Prior, on the deposition of the other dowagers, no doubt expected to reign at Shrublands, but in this object I am not very sorry to say was disappointed. Indeed, I was not a little amused, upon the very first day of her intended reign—that eventful one of which we have been describing the incidents—to see how calmly and gracefully Bessy pulled the throne from under her, on which the old lady was clambering.

Mrs. P. knew the house very well, and everything which it contained; and when Lady Baker drove off with her son and her suite of domestics, Prior dashed through the vacant apartments gleaning what had been left in the flurry of departure—a scarlet feather out of the dowager's room, a shirt-stud and a bottle of hair-oil, the Captain's property. "And now they are gone, and as you can't be alone with him, my dear, I must be with you," says she, coming down to her daughter.

"Of course, mamma, I must be with you," says obedient Elizabeth.

"And there is the pink room, and the blue room, and the yellow room for the boys—and the chintz boudoir for me—I can put them all away, oh, so comfortably!"

"I can come and share Louisa's room, mamma," says Bessy. "It will not be proper for me to stay here at all—until afterwards, you know. Or I can go to my uncle at Saint Boniface. Don't you think that will be best, eh, Frederick?"

"Whatever you wish, my dear Lizzie!" says Lovel.

"And I daresay there will be some little alterations made in the house. You talked, you know, of painting, Mr. Lovel: and the children can go to their grandmamma Bonnington. And on our return when the alterations are made we shall always be delighted to see *you*, Mr. Batchelor—our kindest old friend. Shall we not, Frederick?"

"Always, always," said Frederick.

"Come, children, come to your teas," calls out Mrs. P. in a resolute voice.

"Dear Pop, I'm not going away—that is, only for a few days, dear," says Bessy, kissing the boy; "and you will love me, won't you?"

"All right," says the boy. But Cissy said, when the same appeal was made to her: "I shall love my dear mamma!" and makes her new mother-in-law a very polite curtsey.

"I think you had better put off those men you expect to dinner to-morrow, Fred," I say to Lovel.

"I think I had, Batch," says the gentleman.

"Or you can dine with them at the Club, you know," remarks Elizabeth.

"Yes, Bessy."

"And when the children have had their tea I will go with mamma. My boxes are ready, you know," says arch Bessy.

"And you will stay and dine with Mr. Lovel, won't you, Mr. Batchelor?" asks the lady.

It was the dreariest dinner I ever had in my life. No undertaker could be more gloomy than Bedford, as he served us. We tried to talk politics and literature. We drank too much, purposely. Nothing would do. "Hang me, if I can stand this, Lovel," I said, as we sat mum over our third bottle. "I will go back and sleep at my chambers. I was not a little soft upon her myself, that's the truth. Here's her health, and happiness to both of you, with all my heart." And we drained a great bumper apiece, and I left him. He was very happy I should go.

Bedford stood at the gate, as the little pony carriage came for me in the dusk. "God bless you, sir!" says he. "I can't stand it; I shall go too." And he rubbed his hands over his eyes.

He married Mary Pinhorn, and they have emigrated to Melbourne; whence he sent me, three years ago, an affectionate letter, and a smart gold pin from the diggings.

A month afterwards, a cab might have been seen driving from the Temple to Hanover Square: and a month and a day after that drive, an advertisement might have been read in the *Post* and *Times*:—

"Married, on Thursday, 10th, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Reverend the Master of Saint Boniface College, Oxbridge, uncle of the bride, Frederick Lovel, Esquire, of Shrublands, Roehampton, to Elizabeth, eldest daughter of the late Captain Montagu Prior, K.S.F."

We may hear of Lovel Married some other day, but here is an end of Lovel the Widower. *Valete et plaudite*, you good people, who have witnessed the little comedy. Down with the curtain; cover up the boxes; pop out the gas-lights. Ho! cab! Take us home, and let us have some tea, and go to bed. Good-night, my little players. We have been merry together, and we part with soft hearts and somewhat rueful countenances, don't we?

ROUNDABOUT PAPERS

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ON A LAZY IDLE BOY

I HAD occasion to pass a week in the autumn in the little old town of Coire or Chur, in the Grisons, where lies buried that very ancient British king, saint, and martyr, Lucius,* who founded the Church of Saint Peter, on Cornhill. Few people note the church nowadays, and fewer ever heard of the saint. In the cathedral at Chur, his statue appears surrounded by other sainted persons of his family. With tight red breeches, a Roman habit, a curly brown beard, and a neat little gilt crown and sceptre, he stands, a very comely and cheerful image: and, from what I may call his peculiar position with regard to Cornhill, I beheld this figure of Saint Lucius with more interest than I should have bestowed upon personages who, hierarchically, are, I daresay, his superiors.

The pretty little city stands, so to speak, at the end of the world—of the world of to-day, the world of rapid motion, and rushing railways, and the commerce and intercourse of men. From the northern gate, the iron road stretches away to Zürich, to Basle, to Paris, to home. From the old southern barriers, before which a little river rushes, and around which stretch the crumbling battlements of the ancient town, the road bears the slow diligence or lagging vetturino by the shallow Rhine, through the awful gorges of the Via Mala, and presently over the Splügen to the shores of Como.

I have seldom seen a place more quaint, pretty, calm, and pastoral than this remote little Chur. What need have the inhabitants of walls and ramparts, except to build summer-houses, to trail

* Stow quotes the inscription, still extant, "from the table fast chained in St. Peter's Church, Cornhill;" and says, "he was after some chronicle buried at London, and after some chronicle buried at Glowcester"—but, oh! these incorrect chroniclers! when Alban Butler, in the "Lives of the Saints," v. xii., and Murray's "Handbook," and the Sacristan at Chur, all say Lucius was killed there, and I saw his tomb with my own eyes!

vines, and hang clothes to dry on them? No enemies approach the great mouldering gates: only at morn and even the cows come lowing past them, the village maidens chatter merrily round the fountains, and babble like the ever-voluble stream that flows under the old walls. The schoolboys, with book and satchel, in smart uniforms, march up to the gymnasium, and return thence at their stated time. There is one coffee-house in the town, and I see one old gentleman goes to it. There are shops with no customers seemingly, and the lazy tradesmen look out of their little windows at the single stranger sauntering by. There is a stall with baskets of queer little black grapes and apples, and a pretty brisk trade with half-a-dozen urchins standing round. But, beyond this, there is scarce any talk or movement in the street. There's nobody at the book-shop. "If you will have the goodness to come again in an hour," says the banker, with his mouthful of dinner at one o'clock, "you can have the money." There is nobody at the hotel save the good landlady, the kind waiters, the brisk young cook who ministers to you. Nobody is in the Protestant church—(oh! strange sight, the two confessions are here at peace!)—nobody in the Catholic church: until the sacristan, from his snug abode in the cathedral close, espies the traveller eyeing the monsters and pillars before the old shark-toothed arch of his cathedral, and comes out (with a view to remuneration possibly) and opens the gate, and shows you the venerable church, and the queer old relics in the sacristy, and the ancient vestments (a black velvet cope, amongst other robes, as fresh as yesterday, and presented by that notorious "pervert," Henry of Navarre and France), and the statue of Saint Lucius who built Saint Peter's Church, on Cornhill.

What a quiet, kind, quaint, pleasant, pretty old town! Has it been asleep these hundreds and hundreds of years, and is the brisk young Prince of the Sidereal Realms in his screaming car drawn by his snorting steel elephant coming to waken it? Time was when there must have been life and bustle and commerce here. Those vast venerable walls were not made to keep out cows, but men-at-arms, led by fierce captains, who prowled about the gates, and robbed the traders as they passed in and out with their bales, their goods, their pack-horses and their wains. Is the place so dead that even the clergy of the different denominations can't quarrel? Why, seven or eight, or a dozen, or fifteen hundred years ago (they haven't the register at Saint Peter's up to that remote period—I daresay it was burnt in the fire of London)—a dozen hundred years ago, when there was some life in the town, Saint Lucius was stoned here on account of theological differences, after founding our church in Cornhill.

There was a sweet pretty river walk we used to take in the evening and mark the mountains round glooming with a deeper purple; the shades creeping up the golden walls; the river brawling, the cattle calling, the maids and chatterboxes round the fountains babbling and bawling; and several times in the course of our sober walks we overtook a lazy slouching boy, or hobbledehoy, with a rusty coat, and trousers not too long, and big feet trailing lazily one after the other, and large lazy hands dawdling from out the tight sleeves, and in the lazy hands a little book, which my lad held up to his face, and which I daresay so charmed and ravished him, that he was blind to the beautiful sights around him; unmindful, I would venture to lay any wager, of the lessons he had to learn for to-morrow; forgetful of mother waiting supper, and father preparing a scolding;—absorbed utterly and entirely in his book.

What was it that so fascinated the young student, as he stood by the river shore? Not the *pons asinorum*. What book so delighted him, and blinded him to all the rest of the world, so that he did not care to see the apple-woman with her fruit, or (more tempting still to sons of Eve) the pretty girls with their apple cheeks, who laughed and prattled round the fountain? What was the book? Do you suppose it was Livy, or the Greek grammar? No; it was a NOVEL that you were reading, you lazy, not very clean, good-for-nothing, sensible boy! It was D'Artagnan locking up General Monk in a box, or almost succeeding in keeping Charles the First's head on. It was the prisoner of the Château d'If cutting himself out of the sack fifty feet under water (I mention the novels I like best myself—novels without love or talking, or any of that sort of nonsense, but containing plenty of fighting, escaping, robbery, and rescuing)—cutting himself out of the sack and swimming to the island of Monte Cristo. O Dumas! O thou brave kind gallant old Alexandre! I hereby offer thee homage, and give thee thanks for many pleasant hours. I have read thee (being sick in bed) for thirteen hours of a happy day, and had the ladies of the house fighting for the volumes. Be assured that lazy boy was reading Dumas (or I will go so far as to let the reader here pronounce the eulogium, or insert the name of his favourite author); and as for the anger, or, it may be, the verberations of his schoolmaster, or the remonstrances of his father, or the tender pleadings of his mother that he should not let the supper grow cold—I don't believe the scapegrace cared one fig. No! Figs are sweet, but fictions are sweeter.

Have you ever seen a score of white-bearded, white-robed warriors, or grave seniors of the city, seated at the gate of Jaffa or

Beyrout, and listening to the story-teller reciting his marvels out of "Antar" or the "Arabian Nights"? I was once present when a young gentleman at table put a tart away from him, and said to his neighbour, the Younger Son (with rather a fatuous air), "I never eat sweets."

"Not eat sweets! and do you know why?" says T.

"Because I am past that kind of thing," says the young gentleman.

"Because you are a glutton and a sot!" cries the Elder (and Juvenis winces a little). "All people who have natural healthy appetites love sweets; all children, all women, all Eastern people, whose tastes are not corrupted by gluttony and strong drink." And a plateful of raspberries and cream disappeared before the philosopher.

You take the allegory? Novels are sweets. All people with healthy literary appetites love them—almost all women;—a vast number of clever hard-headed men. Why, one of the most learned physicians in England said to me only yesterday, "I have just read *So-and-so* for the second time" (naming one of Jones's exquisite fictions). Judges, bishops, chancellors, mathematicians are notorious novel-readers; as well as young boys and sweet girls, and their kind tender mothers. Who has not read about Eldon, and how he cried over novels every night when he was not at whist?

As for that lazy naughty boy at Chur, I doubt whether *he* will like novels when he is thirty years of age. He is taking too great a glut of them now. He is eating jelly until he will be sick. He will know most plots by the time he is twenty, so that *he* will never be surprised when the Stranger turns out to be the rightful earl,—when the old waterman, throwing off his beggarly gabardine, shows his stars and the collars of his various orders, and clasping Antonia to his bosom, proves himself to be the prince, her long-lost father. He will recognise the novelist's same characters, though they appear in red-heeled pumps and *ailes-de-pigeon*, or the garb of the nineteenth century. He will get weary of sweets, as boys of private schools grow (or used to grow, for I have done growing some little time myself, and the practice may have ended too)—as private schoolboys used to grow tired of the pudding before their mutton at dinner.

And pray what is the moral of this apologue? The moral I take to be this: the appetite for novels extending to the end of the world—far away in the frozen deep, the sailors reading them to one another during the endless night; far away under the Syrian stars, the solemn sheikhs and elders hearkening to the poet as he recites his tales; far away in the Indian camps, where the soldiers listen

to ——'s tales, or ——'s, after the hot day's march; far away in little Chur yonder, where the lazy boy pores over the fond volume, and drinks it in with all his eyes;—the demand being what we know it is, the merchant must supply it as he will supply saddles and pale ale for Bombay or Calcutta.

But as surely as the cadet drinks too much pale ale, it will disagree with him; and so surely, dear youth, will too much of novels cloy on thee. I wonder, do novel-writers themselves read many novels? If you go into Gunter's, you don't see those charming young ladies (to whom I present my most respectful compliments) eating tarts and ices, but at the proper eventide they have good plain wholesome tea and bread-and-butter. Can anybody tell me does the author of the "Tale of Two Cities" read novels? does the author of the "Tower of London" devour romances? does the dashing "Harry Lorrequer" delight in "Plain or Ringlets" or "Sponge's Sporting Tour"? Does the veteran, from whose flowing pen we had the books which delighted our young days, "Darnley," and "Richelieu," and "Delorme,"* relish the works of Alexandre the Great, and thrill over the "Three Musqueteers"? Does the accomplished author of the "Caxtons" read the other tales in *Blackwood?* (For example, that ghost-story printed last August, and which, for my part, though I read it in the public reading-room at the "Pavilion" Hotel at Folkestone, I protest frightened me so that I scarce dared look out over my shoulder.) Does "Uncle Tom" admire "Adam Bede"? and does the author of the "Vicar of Wrexhill" laugh over the "Warden" and the "Three Clerks"? Dear youth of ingenuous countenance and ingenuous pudor! I make no doubt that the eminent parties above named all partake of novels in moderation—eat jellies—but mainly nourish themselves upon wholesome roast and boiled.

Here, dear youth aforesaid! our *Cornhill Magazine* owners strive to provide thee with facts as well as fiction; and though it does not become them to brag of their Ordinary, at least they invite thee to a table where thou shalt sit in good company. That story of the "Fox"† was written by one of the gallant seamen who sought for poor Franklin under the awful Arctic Night: that account of China‡ is told by the man of all the empire most likely

* By the way, what a strange fate is that which befell the veteran novelist! He was appointed her Majesty's Consul-General in Venice, the only city in Europe where the famous "two cavaliers" cannot by any possibility be seen riding together.

† "The Search for Sir John Franklin. (From the Private Journal of an Officer of the 'Fox.')"

‡ "The Chinese and the Outer Barbarians." By Sir John Bowring.

to know of what he speaks: those pages regarding Volunteers * come from an honoured hand that has borne the sword in a hundred famous fields, and pointed the British guns in the greatest siege in the world.

Shall we point out others? We are fellow-travellers, and shall make acquaintance as the voyage proceeds. In the Atlantic steamers, on the first day out (and on high- and holy-days subsequently), the jellies set down on table are richly ornamented; *medioque in fonte leporum* rise the American and British flags nobly emblazoned in tin. As the passengers remark this pleasing phenomenon, the Captain no doubt improves the occasion by expressing a hope, to his right and left, that the flag of Mr. Bull and his younger Brother may always float side by side in friendly emulation. Novels having been previously compared to jellies—here are two (one perhaps not entirely saccharine, and flavoured with an *amari aliquid* very distasteful to some palates) — two novels † under two flags, the one that ancient ensign which has hung before the well-known booth of "Vanity Fair"; the other that fresh and handsome standard which has lately been hoisted on "Barchester Towers." Pray, sir, or madam, to which dish will you be helped?

So have I seen my friends Captain Lang and Captain Comstock press their guests to partake of the fare on that memorable "First day out," when there is no man, I think, who sits down but asks a blessing on his voyage, and the good ship dips over the bar, and bounds away into the blue water.

* "Our Volunteers." By Sir John Burgoyne.
† "Lovel the Widower" and "Framley Parsonage."

NIL NISI BONUM

ALMOST the last words which Sir Walter spoke to Lockhart, his biographer, were, "Be a good man, my dear!" and with the last flicker of breath on his dying lips, he sighed a farewell to his family, and passed away blessing them.

Two men, famous, admired, beloved, have just left us, the Goldsmith and the Gibbon of our time.* Ere a few weeks are over, many a critic's pen will be at work, reviewing their lives and passing judgment on their works. This is no review, or history, or criticism: only a word in testimony of respect and regard from a man of letters, who owes to his own professional labour the honour of becoming acquainted with these two eminent literary men. One was the first Ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old. He was born almost with the republic; the *pater patriæ* had laid his hand on the child's head. He bore Washington's name; he came amongst us bringing the kindest sympathy, the most artless smiling goodwill. His new country (which some people here might be disposed to regard rather superciliously) could send us, as he showed in his own person, a gentleman, who, though himself born in no very high sphere, was most finished, polished, easy, witty, quiet; and, socially, the equal of the most refined Europeans. If Irving's welcome in England was a kind one, was it not also gratefully remembered? If he ate our salt, did he not pay us with a thankful heart? Who can calculate the amount of friendliness and good feeling for our country which this writer's generous and untiring regard for us disseminated in his own? His books are read by millions † of his countrymen, whom he has taught to love England, and why to love her. It would have been easy to speak otherwise than he did: to inflame national rancours, which, at the time when he first became known as a public writer, war had just renewed: to cry down the old civilisation at the expense of the

* Washington Irving, died November 28, 1859; Lord Macaulay, died December 28, 1859.

† See his *Life* in the most remarkable *Dictionary of Authors*, published lately at Philadelphia by Mr. Alibone.

new: to point out our faults, arrogance, shortcomings, and give the republic to infer how much she was the parent state's superior. There are writers enough in the United States, honest and otherwise, who preach that kind of doctrine. But the good Irving, the peaceful, the friendly, had no place for bitterness in his heart, and no scheme but kindness. Received in England with extraordinary tenderness and friendship (Scott, Southey, Byron, a hundred others have borne witness to their liking for him), he was a messenger of goodwill and peace between his country and ours. "See, friends!" he seems to say, "these English are not so wicked, rapacious, callous, proud, as you have been taught to believe them. I went amongst them a humble man; won my way by my pen; and, when known, found every hand held out to me with kindliness and welcome. Scott is a great man, you acknowledge. Did not Scott's King of England give a gold medal to him, and another to me, your countryman, and a stranger?"

Tradition in the United States still fondly retains the history of the feasts and rejoicings which awaited Irving on his return to his native country from Europe. He had a national welcome; he stammered in his speeches, hid himself in confusion, and the people loved him all the better. He had worthily represented America in Europe. In that young community a man who brings home with him abundant European testimonials is still treated with respect (I have found American writers, of wide-world reputation, strangely solicitous about the opinions of quite obscure British critics, and elated or depressed by their judgments); and Irving went home medalled by the King, diplomatised by the University, crowned and honoured and admired. He had not in any way intrigued for his honours, he had fairly won them; and, in Irving's instance, as in others, the old country was glad and eager to pay them.

In America the love and regard for Irving was a national sentiment. Party wars are perpetually raging there, and are carried on by the press with a rancour and fierceness against individuals which exceed British, almost Irish, virulence. It seemed to me, during a year's travel in the country, as if no one ever aimed a blow at Irving. All men held their hands from that harmless friendly peacemaker. I had the good fortune to see him at New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington,* and remarked how in every place he was honoured and welcome. Every large city has its "Irving House." The country takes pride in the fame of its

* At Washington, Mr. Irving came to a lecture given by the writer, which Mr. Filmore and General Pierce, the President and President Elect, were also kind enough to attend together. "Two Kings of Brentford smelling at one rose," says Irving, looking up with his good-humoured smile.

AN "INTERVIEWER."

men of letters. The gate of his own charming little domain on the beautiful Hudson River was for ever swinging before visitors who came to him. He shut out no one.* I had seen many pictures of his house, and read descriptions of it, in both of which it was treated with a not unusual American exaggeration. It was but a pretty little cabin of a place; the gentleman of the press who took notes of the place, whilst his kind old host was sleeping, might have visited the whole house in a couple of minutes.

And how came it that this house was so small, when Mr. Irving's books were sold by hundreds of thousands, nay, millions, when his profits were known to be large, and the habits of life of the good old bachelor were notoriously modest and simple? He had loved once in his life. The lady he loved died; and he, whom all the world loved, never sought to replace her. I can't say how much the thought of that fidelity has touched me. Does not the very cheerfulness of his after life add to the pathos of that untold story? To grieve always was not in his nature: or, when he had his sorrow, to bring all the world in to condole with him and bemoan it. Deep and quiet he lays the love of his heart, and buries it; and grass and flowers grow over the scarred ground in due time.

Irving had such a small house and such narrow rooms, because there was a great number of people to occupy them. He could only afford to keep one old horse (which, lazy and aged as it was, managed once or twice to run away with that careless old horseman). He could only afford to give plain sherry to that amiable British paragraph-monger from New York, who saw the patriarch asleep over his modest blameless cup, and fetched the public into his private chamber to look at him. Irving could only live very modestly, because the wifeless, childless man had a number of children to whom he was as a father. He had as many as nine nieces, I am told—I saw two of these ladies at his house—with all of whom the dear old man had shared the produce of his labour and genius.

"*Be a good man, my dear.*" One can't but think of these last words of the veteran Chief of Letters, who had tasted and tested the value of worldly success, admiration, prosperity. Was

* Mr. Irving described to me, with that humour and good-humour which he always kept, how, amongst other visitors, a member of the British press who had carried his distinguished pen to America (where he employed it in vilifying his own country) came to Sunnyside, introduced himself to Irving, partook of his wine and luncheon, and in two days described Mr. Irving, his house his nieces, his meal, and his manner of dozing afterwards, in a New York paper. On another occasion, Irving said, laughing, "Two persons came to me, and one held me in conversation whilst the other miscreant took my portrait!"

Irving not good, and of his works, was not his life the best part? In his family, gentle, generous, good-humoured, affectionate, self-denying: in society, a delightful example of complete gentlemanhood; quite unspoiled by prosperity; never obsequious to the great (or, worse still, to the base and mean, as some public men are forced to be in his and other countries); eager to acknowledge every contemporary's merit; always kind and affable to the young members of his calling; in his professional bargains and mercantile dealings delicately honest and grateful; one of the most charming masters of our lighter language; the constant friend to us and our nation; to men of letters doubly dear, not for his wit and genius merely, but as an exemplar of goodness, probity, and pure life:—I don't know what sort of testimonial will be raised to him in his own country, where generous and enthusiastic acknowledgment of American merit is never wanting; but Irving was in our service as well as theirs; and as they have placed a stone at Greenwich yonder in memory of that gallant young Bellot, who shared the perils and fate of some of our Arctic seamen, I would like to hear of some memorial raised by English writers and friends of letters in affectionate remembrance of the dear and good Washington Irving.

As for the other writer, whose departure many friends, some few most dearly-loved relatives, and multitudes of admiring readers deplore, our republic has already decreed his statue, and he must have known that he had earned this posthumous honour. He is not a poet and man of letters merely, but citizen, statesman, a great British worthy. Almost from the first moment when he appears, amongst boys, amongst college students, amongst men, he is marked, and takes rank as a great Englishman. All sorts of successes are easy to him: as a lad he goes down into the arena with others, and wins all the prizes to which he has a mind. A place in the senate is straightway offered to the young man. He takes his seat there; he speaks, when so minded, without party anger or intrigue, but not without party faith and a sort of heroic enthusiasm for his cause. Still he is poet and philosopher even more than orator. That he may have leisure and means to pursue his darling studies, he absents himself for a while, and accepts a richly-remunerative post in the East. As learned a man may live in a cottage or a college common-room; but it always seemed to me that ample means and recognised rank were Macaulay's as of right. Years ago there was a wretched outcry raised because Mr. Macaulay dated a letter from Windsor Castle, where he was staying. Immortal gods! Was this man not a fit guest for any palace in the world? or a fit companion for any man or woman in it? I daresay, after Austerlitz, the old K. K. Court officials and footmen sneered at Napoleon

for dating from Schönbrunn. But that miserable "Windsor Castle" outcry is an echo out of fast-retreating old-world remembrances. The place of such a natural chief was amongst the first in the land; and that country is best, according to our British notion at least, where the man of eminence has the best chance of investing his genius and intellect.

If a company of giants were got together, very likely one or two of the mere six-feet-six people might be angry at the incontestable superiority of the very tallest of the party: and so I have heard some London wits, rather peevish at Macaulay's superiority, complain that he occupied too much of the talk, and so forth. Now that wonderful tongue is to speak no more, will not many a man grieve that he no longer has the chance to listen? To remember the talk is to wonder: to think not only of the treasures he had in his memory, but of the trifles he had stored there, and could produce with equal readiness. Almost on the last day I had the fortune to see him, a conversation happened suddenly to spring up about senior wranglers, and what they had done in after life. To the almost terror of the persons present, Macaulay began with the senior wrangler of 1801–2–3–4, and so on, giving the name of each, and relating his subsequent career and rise. Every man who has known him has his story regarding that astonishing memory. It may be that he was not ill-pleased that you should recognise it; but to those prodigious intellectual feats, which were so easy to him, who would grudge his tribute of homage? His talk was, in a word, admirable, and we admired it.

Of the notices which have appeared regarding Lord Macaulay, up to the day when the present lines are written (the 9th of January), the reader should not deny himself the pleasure of looking especially at two. It is a good sign of the times when such articles as these (I mean the articles in the *Times* and *Saturday Review*) appear in our public prints about our public men. They educate us, as it were, to admire rightly. An uninstructed person in a museum or at a concert may pass by without recognising a picture or a passage of music, which the connoisseur by his side may show him is a masterpiece of harmony, or a wonder of artistic skill. After reading these papers you like and respect more the person you have admired so much already. And so with regard to Macaulay's style there may be faults of course—what critic can't point them out? But for the nonce we are not talking about faults: we want to say *nil nisi bonum*. Well—take at hazard any three pages of the "Essays" or "History:"—and, glimmering below the stream of the narrative, as it were, you, an average reader, see one, two, three, a half-score of allusions to other historic facts, characters,

literature, poetry, with which you are acquainted. Why is this epithet used? Whence is that simile drawn? How does he manage, in two or three words, to paint an individual, or to indicate a landscape? Your neighbour, who has *his* reading, and his little stock of literature stowed away in his mind, shall detect more points, allusions, happy touches, indicating not only the prodigious memory and vast learning of this master, but the wonderful industry, the honest, humble, previous toil of this great scholar. He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels a hundred miles to make a line of description.

Many Londoners—not all—have seen the British Museum Library. I speak *à cœur ouvert*, and pray the kindly reader to bear with me. I have seen all sorts of domes of Peters and Pauls, Sophia, Pantheon,—what not?—and have been struck by none of them so much as by that catholic dome in Bloomsbury, under which our million volumes are housed. What peace, what love, what truth, what beauty, what happiness for all, what generous kindness for you and me, are here spread out! It seems to me one cannot sit down in that place without a heart full of grateful reverence. I own to have said my grace at the table, and to have thanked Heaven for this my English birthright, freely to partake of these bountiful books, and to speak the truth I find there. Under the dome which held Macaulay's brain, and from which his solemn eyes looked out on the world but a fortnight since, what a vast, brilliant, and wonderful store of learning was ranged! what strange lore would he not fetch for you at your bidding! A volume of law, or history, a book of poetry familiar or forgotten (except by himself who forgot nothing), a novel ever so old, and he had it at hand. I spoke to him once about "Clarissa." "Not read 'Clarissa'!" he cried out. "If you have once thoroughly entered on 'Clarissa' and are infected by it, you can't leave it. When I was in India I passed one hot season at the hills, and there were the Governor-General, and the Secretary of Government, and the Commander-in-Chief, and their wives. I had 'Clarissa' with me: and, as soon as they began to read, the whole station was in a passion of excitement about Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes, and her scoundrelly Lovelace! The Governor's wife seized the book, and the Secretary waited for it, and the Chief Justice could not read it for tears!" He acted the whole scene: he paced up and down the "Athenæum" library: I daresay he could have spoken pages of the book—of that book, and of what countless piles of others!

In this little paper let us keep to the text of *nil nisi bonum*. One paper I have read regarding Lord Macaulay says "he had no heart." Why, a man's books may not always speak the truth, but

they speak his mind in spite of himself: and it seems to me this man's heart is beating through every page he penned. He is always in a storm of revolt and indignation against wrong, craft, tyranny. How he cheers heroic resistance; how he backs and applauds freedom struggling for its own; how he hates scoundrels, ever so victorious and successful; how he recognises genius, though selfish villains possess it! The critic who says Macaulay had no heart, might say that Johnson had none: and two men more generous, and more loving, and more hating, and more partial, and more noble, do not live in our history. Those who knew Lord Macaulay knew how admirably tender and generous,* and affectionate he was. It was not his business to bring his family before the theatre footlights, and call for bouquets from the gallery as he wept over them.

If any young man of letters reads this little sermon—and to him, indeed, it is addressed—I would say to him, "Bear Scott's words in your mind, and '*be good, my dear.*'" Here are two literary men gone to their account, and, *laus Deo*, as far as we know, it is fair, and open, and clean. Here is no need of apologies for shortcomings, or explanations of vices which would have been virtues but for unavoidable &c. Here are two examples of men most differently gifted: each pursuing his calling; each speaking his truth as God bade him; each honest in his life; just and irreproachable in his dealings; dear to his friends; honoured by his country; beloved at his fireside. It has been the fortunate lot of both to give incalculable happiness and delight to the world, which thanks them in return with an immense kindliness, respect, affection. It may not be our chance, brother scribe, to be endowed with such merit, or rewarded with such fame. But the rewards of these men are rewards paid to *our service*. We may not win the bâton or epaulettes; but God give us strength to guard the honour of the flag!

* Since the above was written, I have been informed that it has been found, on examining Lord Macaulay's papers, that he was in the habit of giving away *more than a fourth part* of his annual income.

ON TWO CHILDREN IN BLACK

MONTAIGNE and "Howel's Letters" are my bedside books. If I wake at night, I have one or other of them to prattle me to sleep again. They talk about themselves for ever, and don't weary me. I like to hear them tell their old stories over and over again. I read them in the dozy hours, and only half remember them. I am informed that both of them tell coarse stories. I don't heed them. It was the custom of their time, as it is of Highlanders and Hottentots, to dispense with a part of dress which we all wear in cities. But people can't afford to be shocked either at Cape Town or at Inverness every time they meet an individual who wears his national airy raiment. I never knew the "Arabian Nights" was an improper book until I happened once to read it in a "family edition." Well, *qui s'excuse*. . . . Who, pray, has accused me as yet? Here am I smothering dear good old Mrs. Grundy's objections, before she has opened her mouth. I love, I say, and scarce ever tire of hearing, the artless prattle of those two dear old friends, the Perigourdin gentleman and the priggish little Clerk of King Charles's Council. Their egotism in nowise disgusts me. I hope I shall always like to hear men, in reason, talk about themselves. What subject does a man know better? If I stamp on a friend's corn, his outcry is genuine—he confounds my clumsiness in the accents of truth. He is speaking about himself, and expressing his emotion of grief or pain in a manner perfectly authentic and veracious. I have a story of my own, of a wrong done to me by somebody, as far back as the year 1838: whenever I think of it, and have had a couple of glasses of wine, I *cannot* help telling it. The toe is stamped upon: the pain is just as keen as ever: I cry out, and perhaps utter imprecatory language. I told the story only last Wednesday at dinner:—

"Mr. Roundabout," says a lady sitting by me, "how comes it that in your books there is a certain class (it may be of men, or it may be of women, but that is not the question in point)—how comes it, dear sir, there is a certain class of persons whom you

always attack in your writings, and savagely rush at, goad, poke, toss up in the air, kick, and trample on?"

I couldn't help myself. I knew I ought not to do it. I told her the whole story, between the *entrées* and the roast. The wound began to bleed again. The horrid pang was there, as keen and as fresh as ever. If I live half as long as Tithonus,* that crack across my heart can never be cured. There are wrongs and griefs that *can't* be mended. It is all very well of you, my dear Mrs. G., to say that this spirit is unchristian, and that we ought to forgive and forget, and so forth. How can I forget at will? How forgive? I can forgive the occasional waiter who broke my beautiful old decanter at that very dinner. I am not going to do him any injury. But all the powers on earth can't make that claret-jug whole.

So, you see, I told the lady the inevitable story. I was egotistical. I was selfish, no doubt; but I was natural, and was telling the truth. You say you are angry with a man for talking about himself. It is because you yourself are selfish, that that other person's Self does not interest you. Be interested by other people and with their affairs. Let them prattle and talk to you, as I do my dear old egotists just mentioned. When you have had enough of them, and sudden hazes come over your eyes, lay down the volume; pop out the candle, and *dormez bien.* I should like to write a nightcap book—a book that you can muse over, that you can smile over, that you can yawn over—a book of which you can say, "Well, this man is so and so and so and so; but he has a friendly heart (although some wiseacres have painted him as black as Bogey), and you may trust what he says." I should like to touch you sometimes with a reminiscence that shall waken your sympathy, and make you say, *Io anchè* have so thought, felt, smiled, suffered. Now, how is this to be done except by egotism? *Linea recta brevissima.* That right line "I" is the very shortest, simplest, straightforwardest means of communication between us, and stands for what it is worth and no more. Sometimes authors say, "the present writer has often remarked;" or, "The undersigned has observed;" or "Mr. Roundabout presents his compliments to the gentle reader, and begs to state," &c.: but "I" is better and straighter than all these grimaces of modesty: and although these are Roundabout Papers, and may wander who knows whither, I shall ask leave to maintain the upright and simple perpendicular. When this bundle of egotisms is bound up together, as they may be one day, if no accident prevents this tongue from

* "Tithonus," by Tennyson, had appeared in the preceding (the 2nd) number of the *Cornhill Magazine.*

wagging, or this ink from running, they will bore you very likely; so it would to read through "Howel's Letters" from beginning to end, or to eat up the whole of a ham: but a slice on occasion may have a relish: a dip into the volume at random and so on for a page or two: and now and then a smile; and presently a gape; and the book drops out of your hand; and so, *bon soir*, and pleasant dreams to you. I have frequently seen men at clubs asleep over their humble servant's works, and am always pleased. Even at a lecture I don't mind, if they don't snore. Only the other day when my friend A. said, "You've left off that Roundabout business, I see; very glad you have," I joined in the general roar of laughter at the table. I don't care a fig whether Archilochus likes the papers or no. You don't like partridge, Archilochus, or porridge, or what not? Try some other dish. I am not going to force mine down your throat, or quarrel with you if you refuse it. Once in America a clever and candid woman said to me, at the close of a dinner, during which I had been sitting beside her, "Mr. Roundabout, I was told I should not like you; and I don't." "Well, ma'am," says I, in a tone of the most unfeigned simplicity, "I don't care." And we became good friends immediately, and esteemed each other ever after.

So, my dear Archilochus, if you come upon this paper, and say, "Fudge!" and pass on to another, I for one shall not be in the least mortified. If you say, "What does he mean by calling this paper 'On Two Children in Black' when there's nothing about people in black at all, unless the ladies he met (and evidently bored) at dinner were black women? What is all this egotistical pother? A plague on his I's!" My dear fellow, if you read "Montaigne's Essays," you must own that he might call almost any one by the name of any other, and that an essay on the Moon or an essay on Green Cheese would be as appropriate a title as one of his on Coaches, on the Art of Discoursing, or Experience, or what you will. Besides, if I *have* a subject (and I have), I claim to approach it in a roundabout manner.

You remember Balzac's tale of the "Peau de Chagrin," and how every time the possessor used it for the accomplishment of some wish the fairy *peau* shrank a little and the owner's life correspondingly shortened? I have such a desire to be well with my public that I am actually giving up my favourite story. I am killing my goose, I know I am. I can't tell my story of the children in black after this; after printing it, and sending it through the country. When they are gone to the printer's these little things become public property. I take their hands. I bless them. I say, "Good-bye, my little dears." I am quite sorry to part with them:

but the fact is, I have told all my friends about them already, and don't dare to take them about with me any more.

Now every word is true of this little anecdote, and I submit that there lies in it a most curious and exciting little mystery. I am like a man who gives you the last bottle of his '25 claret. It is the pride of his cellar; he knows it, and he has a right to praise it. He takes up the bottle, fashioned so slenderly—takes it up tenderly, cants it with care, places it before his friends, declares how good it is, with honest pride, and wishes he had a hundred dozen bottles more of the same wine in his cellar. *Si quid novisti*, &c. I shall be very glad to hear from you. I protest and vow I am giving you the best I have.

Well, who those little boys in black were, I shall never probably know, to my dying day. They were very pretty little men, with pale faces, and large melancholy eyes; and they had beautiful little hands, and little boots, and the finest little shirts, and black pale-tots lined with the richest silk; and they had picture-books in several languages, English, and French, and German, I remember. Two more aristocratic-looking little men I never set eyes on. They were travelling with a very handsome pale lady in mourning, and a maid-servant dressed in black, too; and on the lady's face there was the deepest grief. The little boys clambered and played about the carriage, and she sat watching. It was a railway-carriage from Frankfort to Heidelberg.

I saw at once that she was the mother of those children, and going to part from them. Perhaps I have tried parting with my own, and not found the business very pleasant. Perhaps I recollect driving down (with a certain trunk and carpet-bag on the box) with my own mother to the end of the avenue, where we waited—only a few minutes—until the whirring wheels of that "Defiance" coach were heard rolling towards us as certain as death. Twang goes the horn; up goes the trunk; down come the steps. Bah! I see the autumn evening: I hear the wheels now: I smart the cruel smart again: and, boy or man, have never been able to bear the sight of people parting from their children.

I thought these little men might be going to school for the first time in their lives; and mamma might be taking them to the Doctor, and would leave them with many fond charges, and little wistful secrets of love, bidding the elder to protect his younger brother, and the younger to be gentle, and to remember to pray to God always for his mother, who would pray for her boy too. Our party made friends with these young ones during the little journey; but the poor lady was too sad to talk except to the boys now and again, and sat in her corner, pale, and silently looking at them.

The next day, we saw the lady and her maid driving in the direction of the railway-station, *without the boys.* The parting had taken place, then. That night they would sleep among strangers. The little beds at home were vacant, and poor mother might go and look at them. Well, tears flow, and friends part, and mothers pray every night all over the world. I daresay we went to see Heidelberg Castle, and admired the vast shattered walls, and quaint gables; and the Neckar running its bright course through that charming scene of peace and beauty; and ate our dinner, and drank our wine with relish. The poor mother would eat but little *Abendessen* that night; and, as for the children—that first night at school—hard bed, hard words, strange boys bullying, and laughing, and jarring you with their hateful merriment—as for the first night at a strange school, we most of us remember what *that* is. And the first is not the *worst,* my boys, there's the rub. But each man has his share of troubles, and, I suppose, you must have yours.

From Heidelberg we went to Baden-Baden: and, I daresay, saw Madame de Schlangenbad and Madame de la Cruchecassée, and Count Punter, and honest Captain Blackball. And whom should we see in the evening but our two little boys, walking on each side of a fierce, yellow-faced, bearded man! We wanted to renew our acquaintance with them, and they were coming forward quite pleased to greet us. But the father pulled back one of the little men by his paletot, gave a grim scowl, and walked away. I can see the children now looking rather frightened away from us and up into the father's face, or the cruel uncle's—which was he? I think he was the father. So this was the end of them. Not school, as I at first had imagined. The mother was gone, who had given them the heaps of pretty books, and the pretty studs in the shirts, and the pretty silken clothes, and the tender—tender cares; and they were handed to this scowling practitioner of Trente-et-Quarante. Ah! this is worse than school. Poor little men! poor mother sitting by the vacant little beds! We saw the children once or twice after, always in Scowler's company; but we did not dare to give each other any marks of recognition.

From Baden we went to Basle, and thence to Lucerne, and so over the Saint Gothard into Italy. From Milan we went to Venice; and now comes the singular part of my story. In Venice there is a little court of which I forget the name: but in it is an apothecary's shop, whither I went to buy some remedy for the bites of certain animals which abound in Venice. Crawling animals, skipping animals, and humming flying animals; all three will have at you at once; and one night nearly drove me into a strait-waistcoat.

Well, as I was coming out of the apothecary's with the bottle of spirits of hartshorn in my hand (it really does do the bites a great deal of good), whom should I light upon but one of my little Heidelberg-Baden boys!

I have said how handsomely they were dressed as long as they were with their mother. When I saw the boy at Venice, who perfectly recognised me, his only garb was a wretched yellow cotton gown. His little feet, on which I had admired the little shiny boots, were *without shoe or stocking*. He looked at me, ran to an old hag of a woman, who seized his hand; and with her he disappeared down one of the thronged lanes of the city.

From Venice we went to Trieste (the Vienna railway at that time was only opened as far as Laybach, and the magnificent Semmering Pass was not quite completed). At a station between Laybach and Graetz, one of my companions alighted for refreshment, and came back to the carriage saying:—

"There's that horrible man from Baden with the two little boys."

Of course, we had talked about the appearance of the little boy at Venice, and his strangely altered garb. My companion said they were pale, wretched-looking, and *dressed quite shabbily*.

I got out at several stations, and looked at all the carriages. I could not see my little men. From that day to this I have never set eyes on them. That is all my story. Who were they? What could they be? How can you explain that mystery of the mother giving them up; of the remarkable splendour and elegance of their appearance while under her care; of their barefooted squalor in Venice, a month afterwards; of their shabby habiliments at Laybach? Had the father gambled away his money, and sold their clothes? How came they to have passed out of the hands of a refined lady (as she evidently was, with whom I first saw them) into the charge of quite a common woman like her with whom I saw one of the boys at Venice? Here is but one chapter of the story. Can any man write the next, or that preceding the strange one on which I happened to light? Who knows? the mystery may have some quite simple solution. I saw two children, attired like little princes, taken from their mother and consigned to other care; and a fortnight afterwards, one of them barefooted and like a beggar. Who will read this riddle of The Two Children in Black?

THE LAST SKETCH

NOT many days since I went to visit a house where in former years I had received many a friendly welcome. We went into the owner's—an artist's—studio. Prints, pictures, and sketches hung on the walls as I had last seen and remembered them. The implements of the painter's art were there. The light which had shone upon so many many hours of patient and cheerful toil poured through the northern window upon print and bust, lay figure and sketch, and upon the easel before which the good, the gentle, the beloved Leslie laboured. In this room the busy brain had devised, and the skilful hand executed, I know not how many of the noble works which have delighted the world with their beauty and charming humour. Here the poet called up into pictorial presence, and informed with life, grace, beauty, infinite friendly mirth and wondrous naturalness of expression, the people of whom his dear books told him the stories,—his Shakspeare, his Cervantes, his Molière, his Le Sage. There was his last work on the easel—a beautiful fresh smiling shape of Titania, such as his sweet guileless fancy imagined the *Midsummer Night's* queen to be. Gracious, and pure, and bright, the sweet smiling image glimmers on the canvas. Fairy elves, no doubt, were to have been grouped around their mistress in laughing clusters. Honest Bottom's grotesque head and form are indicated as reposing by the side of the consummate beauty. The darkling forest would have grown around them, with the stars glittering from the midsummer sky: the flowers at the queen's feet, and the boughs and foliage about her, would have been peopled with gambolling sprites and fays. They were dwelling in the artist's mind no doubt, and would have been developed by that patient, faithful, admirable genius: but the busy brain stopped working, the skilful hand fell lifeless, the loving honest heart ceased to beat. What was she to have been—that fair Titania—when perfected by the patient skill of the poet, who in imagination saw the sweet innocent figure, and with tender courtesy and caresses, as it were, posed and shaped and traced the fair form? Is there record kept anywhere of fancies conceived, beautiful, unborn? Some day

will they assume form in some yet undeveloped light? If our bad unspoken thoughts are registered against us, and are written in the awful account, will not the good thoughts unspoken, the love and tenderness, the pity, beauty, charity, which pass through the breast, and cause the heart to throb with silent good, find a remembrance too? A few weeks more, and this lovely offspring of the poet's conception would have been complete—to charm the world with its beautiful mirth. May there not be some sphere unknown to us where it may have an existence? They say our words, once out of our lips, go travelling *in omne ævum*, reverberating for ever and ever. If our words, why not our thoughts? If the Has Been, why not the Might Have Been?

Some day our spirits may be permitted to walk in galleries of fancies more wondrous and beautiful than any achieved works which at present we see, and our minds to behold and delight in masterpieces which poets' and artists' minds have fathered and conceived only.

With a feeling much akin to that with which I looked upon the friend's—the admirable artist's—unfinished work I can fancy many readers turning to the last pages which were traced by Charlotte Brontë's hand. Of the multitude that have read her books, who has not known and deplored the tragedy of her family, her own most sad and untimely fate? Which of her readers has not become her friend? Who that has known her books has not admired the artist's noble English, the burning love of truth, the bravery, the simplicity, the indignation at wrong, the eager sympathy, the pious love and reverence, the passionate honour, so to speak, of the woman? What a story is that of that family of poets in their solitude yonder on the gloomy northern moors! At nine o'clock at night, Mrs. Gaskell tells, after evening prayers, when their guardian and relative had gone to bed, the three poetesses—the three maidens, Charlotte, and Emily, and Anne—Charlotte being the "motherly friend and guardian to the other two"—"began, like restless wild animals, to pace up and down their parlour, 'making out' their wonderful stories, talking over plans and projects, and thoughts of what was to be their future life."

One evening, at the close of 1854, as Charlotte Nicholls sat with her husband by the fire, listening to the howling of the wind about the house, she suddenly said to her husband, "If you had not been with me, I must have been writing now." She then ran upstairs, and brought down, and read aloud, the beginning of a new tale. When she had finished, her husband remarked, "The critics will accuse you of repetition." She replied, "Oh, I shall alter that. I always begin two or three times before I can please myself." But

it was not to be. The trembling little hand was to write no more. The heart newly awakened to love and happiness, and throbbing with maternal hope, was soon to cease to beat; that intrepid outspeaker and champion of truth, that eager impetuous redresser of wrong, was to be called out of the world's fight and struggle, to lay down the shining arms, and to be removed to a sphere where even a noble indignation *cor ulterius nequit lacerare*, and where truth complete, and right triumphant, no longer need to wage war.

I can only say of this lady, *vidi tantum*. I saw her first just as I rose out of an illness from which I had never thought to recover. I remember the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes. An impetuous honesty seemed to me to characterise the woman. Twice I recollect she took me to task for what she held to be errors in doctrine. Once about Fielding we had a disputation. She spoke her mind out. She jumped too rapidly to conclusions. (I have smiled at one or two passages in the "Biography," in which my own disposition or behaviour forms the subject of talk.) She formed conclusions that might be wrong and built up whole theories of character upon them. New to the London world, she entered it with an independent indomitable spirit of her own; and judged of contemporaries, and especially spied out arrogance or affectation, with extraordinary keenness of vision. She was angry with her favourites if their conduct or conversation fell below her ideal. Often she seemed to me to be judging the London folk prematurely: but perhaps the city is rather angry at being judged. I fancied an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us, and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals. She gave me the impression of being a very pure, and lofty, and high-minded person. A great and holy reverence of right and truth seemed to be with her always. Such, in our brief interview, she appeared to me. As one thinks of that life so noble, so lonely—of that passion for truth—of those nights and nights of eager study, swarming fancies, invention, depression, elation, prayer; as one reads the necessarily incomplete, though most touching and admirable history of the heart that throbbed in this one little frame—of this one amongst the myriads of souls that have lived and died on this great earth—this great earth?—this little speck in the infinite universe of God,—with what wonder do we think of to-day, with what awe await to-morrow, when that which is now but darkly seen shall be clear! As I read this little fragmentary sketch, I think of the rest. Is it? And where is it? Will not the leaf be turned some day, and the story be told? Shall the deviser of the tale somewhere perfect the history of little Emma's griefs and troubles? Shall Titania come forth complete with her

sportive court, with the flowers at her feet, the forest around her, and all the stars of summer glittering overhead?

How well I remember the delight, and wonder, and pleasure with which I read "Jane Eyre," sent to me by an author whose name and sex were then alike unknown to me; the strange fascinations of the book; and how with my own work pressing upon me, I could not, having taken the volumes up, lay them down until they were read through! Hundreds of those who, like myself, recognised and admired that master-work of a great genius, will look with a mournful interest and regard and curiosity upon the last fragmentary sketch from the noble hand which wrote "Jane Eyre."

ON RIBBONS

THE uncle of the present Sir Louis N. Bonaparte, K.G., &c., inaugurated his reign as Emperor over the neighbouring nation by establishing an Order, to which all citizens of his country, military, naval, and civil—all men most distinguished in science, letters, arts, and commerce—were admitted. The emblem of the Order was but a piece of ribbon, more or less long or broad, with a toy at the end of it. The Bourbons had toys and ribbons of their own, blue, black, and all-coloured ; and on their return to dominion such good old Tories would naturally have preferred to restore their good old Orders of Saint Louis, Saint Esprit, and Saint Michel ; but France had taken the ribbon of the Legion of Honour so to her heart that no Bourbon sovereign dared to pluck it thence.

In England, until very late days, we have been accustomed rather to pooh-pooh national Orders, to vote ribbons and crosses tinsel gewgaws, foolish foreign ornaments, and so forth. It is known how the Great Duke (the breast of whose own coat was plastered with some half-hundred decorations) was averse to the wearing of ribbons, medals, clasps, and the like by his army. We have all of us read how uncommonly distinguished Lord Castlereagh looked at Vienna, where he was the only gentleman present without any decoration whatever. And the Great Duke's theory was that clasps and ribbons, stars and garters, were good and proper ornaments for himself, for the chief officers of his distinguished army, and for gentlemen of high birth, who might naturally claim to wear a band of garter blue across their waistcoats ; but that for common people your plain coat, without stars and ribbons, was the most sensible wear.

And no doubt you and I are as happy, as free, as comfortable ; we can walk and dine as well ; we can keep the winter's cold out as well without a star on our coats, as without a feather in our hats. How often we have laughed at the absurd mania of the Americans for dubbing their senators, members of Congress, and States' representatives, Honourable ! We have a right to call *our*

Privy Councillors Right Honourable, our Lords' sons Honourable, and so forth: but for a nation as numerous, well-educated, strong, rich, civilised, free as our own, to dare to give its distinguished citizens titles of honour—monstrous assumption of low-bred arrogance and *parvenu* vanity! Our titles are respectable, but theirs absurd. Mr. Jones, of London, a Chancellor's son, and a tailor's grandson, is justly Honourable, and entitled to be Lord Jones at his noble father's decease: but Mr. Brown, the senator from New York, is a silly upstart for tacking Honourable to his name, and our sturdy British good sense laughs at him. Who has not laughed (I have myself) at Honourable Nahum Dodge, Honourable Zeno Scudder, Honourable Hiram Boake, and the rest? A score of such queer names and titles I have smiled at in America. And, *mutato nomine?* I meet a born idiot, who is a peer and born legislator. This drivelling noodle and his descendants through life are your natural superiors and mine—your and my children's superiors. I read of an alderman kneeling and knighted at Court: I see a Goldstick waddling backwards before Majesty in a procession; and if we laugh, don't you suppose the Americans laugh too?

Yes, stars, garters, orders, knighthoods, and the like, are folly. Yes, Bobus, citizen and soapboiler, is a good man, and no one laughs at him or good Mrs. Bobus, as they have their dinner at one o'clock. But who will not jeer at Sir Thomas on a melting day, and Lady Bobus, at Margate, eating shrimps in a donkey-chaise? Yes, knighthood is absurd: and chivalry an idiotic superstition: and Sir Walter Manny was a zany: and Nelson, with his flaming stars and cordons, splendent upon a day of battle, was a madman: and Murat, with his crosses and orders, at the head of his squadrons charging victorious, was only a crazy mountebank, who had been a tavern-waiter, and was puffed up with absurd vanity about his dress and legs. And the men of the French line at Fontenoy, who told Messieurs de la Garde to fire first, were smirking French dancing-masters; and the Black Prince, waiting upon his Royal prisoner, was acting an inane masquerade: and Chivalry is naught; and Honour is humbug; and Gentlemanhood is an extinct folly; and Ambition is madness; and desire of distinction is criminal vanity; and glory is bosh; and fair fame is idleness; and nothing is true but two and two; and the colour of all the world is drab; and all men are equal; and one man is as tall as another; and one man is as good as another—and a great dale betther, as the Irish philosopher said.

Is this so? Titles and badges of honour are vanity; and in the American Revolution you have his Excellency General Washington sending back, and with proper spirit sending back, a letter in

which he is not addressed as Excellency and General. Titles are abolished; and the American Republic swarms with men claiming and bearing them. You have the French soldier cheered and happy in his dying agony, and kissing with frantic joy the chief's hand who lays the little cross on the bleeding bosom. At home you have the Dukes and Earls jobbing and intriguing for the Garter; the Military Knights grumbling at the Civil Knights of the Bath; the little ribbon eager for the collar; the soldiers and seamen from India and the Crimea marching in procession before the Queen, and receiving from her hands the cross bearing her Royal name. And, remember, there are not only the cross-wearers, but all the fathers and friends; all the women who have prayed for their absent heroes; Harry's wife, and Tom's mother, and Jack's daughter, and Frank's sweetheart, each of whom wears in her heart of hearts afterwards the badge which son, father, lover, has won by his merit; each of whom is made happy and proud, and is bound to the country by that little bit of ribbon.

I have heard, in a lecture about George the Third, that, at his accession, the King had a mind to establish an order for literary men. It was to have been called the Order of Minerva—I suppose with an Owl for a badge. The knights were to have worn a star of sixteen points, and a yellow ribbon; and good old Samuel Johnson was talked of as President, or Grand Cross, or Grand Owl, of the society. Now about such an order as this there certainly may be doubts. Consider the claimants, the difficulty of settling their claims, the rows and squabbles amongst the candidates, and the subsequent decision of posterity! Dr. Beattie would have ranked as first poet, and twenty years after the sublime Mr. Hayley would, no doubt, have claimed the Grand Cross. Mr. Gibbon would not have been eligible, on account of his dangerous free-thinking opinions; and her sex, as well as her republican sentiments, might have interfered with the knighthood of the immortal Mrs. Catharine Macaulay. How Goldsmith would have paraded the ribbon at Madame Cornelys's, or the Academy dinner! How Peter Pindar would have railed at it! Fifty years later, the noble Scott would have worn the Grand Cross and deserved it; but Gifford would have had it; and Byron, and Shelley, and Hazlitt, and Hunt would have been without it; and had Keats been proposed as officer, how the Tory prints would have yelled with rage and scorn! Had the star of Minerva lasted to our present time——but I pause, not because the idea is dazzling, but too awful. Fancy the claimants, and the row about their precedence! Which philosopher shall have the grand cordon?—which the collar?—which the little scrap no bigger than a buttercup? Of the historians—A, say,—and C, and F, and

G, and S, and T,—which shall be Companion and which Grand Owl? Of the poets, who wears, or claims, the largest and brightest star? Of the novelists, there is A, and B and C D; and E (star of first magnitude, newly discovered), and F (a magazine of wit), and fair G, and H, and I, and brave old J, and charming K, and L, and M, and N, and O (fair twinklers), and I am puzzled between three P's—Peacock, Miss Pardoe, and Paul Pry—and Queechy, and R, and S, and T, *mère et fils*, and very likely U, O gentle reader, for who has not written his novel nowadays?—who has not a claim to the star and straw-coloured ribbon?—and who shall have the biggest and largest? Fancy the struggle! Fancy the squabble! Fancy the distribution of prizes!

Who shall decide on them? Shall it be the Sovereign? shall it be the Minister for the time being? and has Lord Palmerston made a deep study of novels? In this matter the late Ministry,* to be sure, was better qualified; but even then, grumblers who had not got their canary cordons, would have hinted at professional jealousies entering the Cabinet; and, the ribbons being awarded, Jack would have scowled at his because Dick had a broader one; Ned been indignant because Bob's was as large; Tom would have thrust his into the drawer, and scorned to wear it at all. No—no: the so-called literary world was well rid of Minerva and her yellow ribbon. The great poets would have been indifferent, the little poets jealous, the funny men furious, the philosophers satirical, the historians supercilious, and, finally, the jobs without end. Say, ingenuity and cleverness are to be rewarded by State tokens and prizes—and take for granted the Order of Minerva is established—who shall have it? A great philosopher? no doubt we cordially salute him G.C.M. A great historian? G.C.M. of course. A great engineer? G.C.M. A great poet? received with acclamation G.C.M. A great painter? oh! certainly, G.C.M. If a great painter, why not a great novelist? Well, pass, great novelist, G.C.M. But if a poetic, a pictorial, a story-telling or music-composing artist, why not a singing artist? Why not a basso-profondo? Why not a primo tenore? And if a singer, why should not a ballet-dancer come bounding on the stage with his cordon, and cut capers to the music of a row of decorated fiddlers? A chemist puts in his claim for having invented a new colour; an apothecary for a new pill; the cook for a new sauce; the tailor for a new cut of trousers. We have brought the star of Minerva down from the breast to the pantaloons. Stars and garters! can we go any farther; or shall we give the shoemaker the yellow ribbon of the order for his shoe-tie?

* That of Lord Derby, in 1859, which included Mr. Disraeli and Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

When I began this present Roundabout excursion, I think I had not quite made up my mind whether we would have an Order of all the Talents or not: perhaps I rather had a hankering for a rich ribbon and gorgeous star, in which my family might like to see me at parties in my best waistcoat. But then the door opens, and there come in, and by the same right too, Sir Alexis Soyer! Sir Alessandro Tamburini! Sir Agostino Velluti! Sir Antonio Paganini (violinist)! Sir Sandy McGuffog (piper to the most noble the Marquis of Farintosh)! Sir Alcide Flicflac (premier danseur of H.M. Theatre)! Sir Harley Quin and Sir Joseph Grimaldi (from Covent Garden)! They have all the yellow ribbon. They are all honourable, and clever, and distinguished artists. Let us elbow through the rooms, make a bow to the lady of the house, give a nod to Sir George Thrum, who is leading the orchestra, and go and get some champagne and seltzer-water from Sir Richard Gunter, who is presiding at the buffet. A national decoration might be well and good: a token awarded by the country to all its *benemerentibus:* but most gentlemen with Minerva stars would, I think, be inclined to wear very wide breast-collars to their coats. Suppose yourself, brother penman, decorated with this ribbon, and looking in the glass, would you not laugh? Would not wife and daughters laugh at that canary-coloured emblem?

But suppose a man, old or young, of figure ever so stout, thin, stumpy, homely, indulging in looking-glass reflections with that hideous ribbon and cross called V.C. on his coat, would he not be proud? and his family, would not they be prouder? For your nobleman there is the famous old blue garter and star, and welcome. If I were a marquis—if I had thirty—forty thousand a year (settle the sum, my dear Ahaschar, according to your liking), I should consider myself entitled to my seat in Parliament and to my garter. The garter belongs to the Ornamental Classes. Have you seen the new magnificent *Pavo spicifer* at the Zoological Gardens, and do you grudge him his jewelled coronet, and the azure splendour of his waistcoat? I like my Lord Mayor to have a gilt coach; my magnificent monarch to be surrounded by magnificent nobles: I huzzay respectfully when they pass in procession. It is good for Mr. Briefless (50 Pump Court, fourth floor), that there should be a Lord Chancellor, with a gold robe and fifteen thousand a year. It is good for a poor curate that there should be splendid bishops at Fulham and Lambeth: their Lordships were poor curates once, and have won, so to speak, their ribbon. Is a man who puts into a lottery to be sulky because he does not win the twenty thousand pounds prize? Am I to fall into a rage, and bully my family when I come home, after going to see Chatsworth or Windsor, because we

have only two little drawing-rooms? Welcome to your garter, my Lord, and shame upon him *qui mal y pense!*

So I arrive in my roundabout way near the point towards which I have been trotting ever since we set out.

In a voyage to America, some nine years since, on the seventh or eighth day out from Liverpool, Captain L—— came to dinner at eight bells as usual, talked a little to the persons right and left of him, and helped the soup with his accustomed politeness. Then he went on deck, and was back in a minute, and operated on the fish, looking rather grave the while.

Then he went on deck again; and this time was absent, it may be, three or five minutes, during which the fish disappeared, and the *entrées* arrived, and the roast beef. Say ten minutes passed—I can't tell after nine years.

Then L—— came down with a pleased and happy countenance this time, and began carving the sirloin: "We have seen the light," he said. "Madam, may I help you to a little gravy, or a little horseradish?" or what not?

I forget the name of the light; nor does it matter. It was a point off Newfoundland for which he was on the look-out, and so well did the *Canada* know where she was, that, between soup and beef, the captain had sighted the headland by which his course was lying.

And so through storm and darkness, through fog and midnight, the ship had pursued her steady way over the pathless ocean and roaring seas, so surely that the officers who sailed her knew her place within a minute or two, and guided us with a wonderful providence safe on our way. Since the noble Cunard Company has run its ships, but one accident, and that through the error of a pilot, has happened on the line.

By this little incident (hourly of course repeated, and trivial to all sea-going people) I own I was immensely moved, and never can think of it but with a heart full of thanks and awe. We trust our lives to these seamen, and how nobly they fulfil their trust! They are, under Heaven, as a providence for us. Whilst we sleep, their untiring watchfulness keeps guard over us. All night through that bell sounds at its season, and tells how our sentinels defend us. It rang when the *Amazon* was on fire, and chimed its heroic signal of duty, and courage, and honour. Think of the dangers these seamen undergo for us: the hourly peril and watch; the familiar storm; the dreadful iceberg; the long winter nights when the decks are as glass, and the sailor has to climb through icicles to bend the stiff sail on the yard! Think of their courage and their kindnesses in cold, in tempest, in hunger, in wreck! "The women and

children to the boats," says the captain of the *Birkenhead*, and, with the troops formed on the deck, and the crew obedient to the word of glorious command, the immortal ship goes down. Read the story of the *Sarah Sands*:—

"'SARAH SANDS.'

"The screw steamship *Sarah Sands*, 1330 registered tons, was chartered by the East India Company in the autumn of 1857, for the conveyance of troops to India. She was commanded by John Squire Castle. She took out a part of the 54th Regiment, upwards of 350 persons, besides the wives and children of some of the men, and the families of some of the officers. All went well till the 11th November, when the ship had reached lat. 14° S., long. 56° E., upwards of 400 miles from the Mauritius.

"Between three and four P.M. on that day a very strong smell of fire was perceived arising from the after-deck, and upon going below into the hold, Captain Castle found it to be on fire, and immense volumes of smoke arising from it. Endeavours were made to reach the seat of the fire, but in vain; the smoke and heat were too much for the men. There was, however, no confusion. Every order was obeyed with the same coolness and courage with which it was given. The engine was immediately stopped. All sail was taken in, and the ship brought to the wind, so as to drive the smoke and fire, which was in the after-part of the ship, astern. Others were, at the same time, getting fire-hoses fitted and passed to the scene of the fire. The fire, however, continued to increase, and attention was directed to the ammunition contained in the powder-magazines, which were situated one on each side the ship, immediately above the fire. The starboard magazine was soon cleared. But by this time the whole of the after-part of the ship was so much enveloped in smoke that it was scarcely possible to stand, and great fears were entertained on account of the port magazine. Volunteers were called for, and came immediately, and, under the guidance of Lieutenant Hughes, attempted to clear the port magazine, which they succeeded in doing, with the exception, as was supposed, of one or two barrels. It was most dangerous work. The men became overpowered with the smoke and heat, and fell; and several, while thus engaged, were dragged up by ropes, senseless.

"The flames soon burst up through the deck, and running rapidly along the various cabins, set the greater part on fire.

"In the meantime Captain Castle took steps for lowering the boats. There was a heavy gale at the time, but they were launched

without the least accident. The soldiers were mustered on deck; —there was no rush to the boats;—and the men obeyed the word of command as if on parade. The men were informed that Captain Castle did not despair of saving the ship, but that they must be prepared to leave her if necessary. The women and children were lowered into the port lifeboat, under the charge of Mr. Very, third officer, who had orders to keep clear of the ship until recalled.

"Captain Castle then commenced constructing rafts of spare spars. In a short time, three were put together, which would have been capable of saving a great number of those on board. Two were launched overboard, and safely moored alongside, and then a third was left across the deck forward, ready to be launched.

"In the meantime the fire had made great progress. The whole of the cabins were one body of fire, and at about 8.30 P.M. flames burst through the upper deck, and shortly after the mizzen rigging caught fire. Fears were entertained of the ship paying off, in which case the flames would have been swept forwards by the wind; but fortunately the after-braces were burnt through, and the main-yard swung round, which kept the ship's head to wind. About 9 P.M. a fearful explosion took place in the port magazine, arising, no doubt, from the one or two barrels of powder which it had been impossible to remove. By this time the ship was one body of flame, from the stern to the main rigging, and thinking it scarcely possible to save her, Captain Castle called Major Brett (then in command of the troops, for the Colonel was in one of the boats) forward, and, telling him that he feared the ship was lost, requested him to endeavour to keep order among the troops till the last, but, at the same time, to use every exertion to check the fire. Providentially, the iron bulkhead in the after-part of the ship withstood the action of the flames, and here all efforts were concentrated to keep it cool.

"'No person,' says the captain, 'can describe the manner in which the men worked to keep the fire back; one party were below, keeping the bulkhead cool, and when several were dragged up senseless, fresh volunteers took their places, who were, however, soon in the same state. At about 10 P.M. the maintopsail-yard took fire. Mr. Welch, one quartermaster, and four or five soldiers, went aloft with wet blankets, and succeeded in extinguishing it, but not until the yard and mast were nearly burnt through. The work of fighting the fire below continued for hours, and about midnight it appeared that some impression was made; and after that the men drove it back, inch by inch, until daylight, when they had completely got it under. The ship was now in a frightful plight. The after-part was literally burnt out—merely the shell remaining

—the port quarter blown out by the explosion: fifteen feet of water in the hold.'

"The gale still prevailed, and the ship was rolling and pitching in a heavy sea, and taking in large quantities of water abaft: the tanks, too, were rolling from side to side in the hold.

"As soon as the smoke was partially cleared away, Captain Castle got spare sails and blankets aft to stop the leak, passing two hawsers round the stern, and setting them up. The troops were employed baling and pumping. This continued during the whole morning.

"In the course of the day the ladies joined the ship. The boats were ordered alongside, but they found the sea too heavy to remain there. The gig had been abandoned during the night, and the crew, under Mr. Wood, fourth officer, had got into another of the boats. The troops were employed the remainder of the day baling and pumping, and the crew securing the stern. All hands were employed during the following night baling and pumping, the boats being moored alongside, where they received some damage. At daylight, on the 13th, the crew were employed hoisting the boats, the troops were working manfully baling and pumping. Latitude at noon, 13 deg. 12 min. south. At 5 P.M. the foresail and foretopsail were set, the rafts were cut away, and the ship bore for the Mauritius. On Thursday, the 19th, she sighted the Island of Rodrigues, and arrived at Mauritius on Monday the 23rd."

The Nile and Trafalgar are not more glorious to our country, are not greater victories than these won by our merchant-seamen. And if you look in the Captains' reports of any maritime register, you will see similar acts recorded every day. I have such a volume for last year now lying before me. In the second number, as I open it at hazard, Captain Roberts, master of the ship *Empire*, from Shields to London, reports how on the 14th ult. (the 14th of December 1859), he,

"being off Whitby, discovered the ship to be on fire between the main hold and boilers: got the hose from the engine laid on, and succeeded in subduing the fire; but only apparently; for at seven the next morning, the *Dudgeon* bearing S.S.E. seven miles' distance, the fire again broke out, causing the ship to be enveloped in flames on both sides of midships: got the hose again into play, and all hands to work with buckets to combat with the fire. Did not succeed in stopping it till four P.M., to effect which, were obliged to cut away the deck and top sides, and throw overboard part of the cargo. The vessel was very much damaged and leaky: determined

to make for the Humber. Ship was run on shore on the mud, near Grimsby harbour, with five feet of water in her hold. The donkey-engine broke down. The water increased so fast as to put out the furnace fires and render the ship almost unmanageable. On the tide flowing a tug towed the ship off the mud, and got her into Grimsby to repair."

On the 2nd of November, Captain Strickland, of the *Purchase* brigantine from Liverpool to Yarmouth, U.S.,

"encountered heavy gales from W.N.W. to W.S.W., in lat. 43° N., long. 34° W., in which we lost jib, foretopmast, staysail, topsail, and carried away the foretopmast stays, bobstays and bowsprit, headsails, cutwater and stern, also started the wood ends, which caused the vessel to leak. Put her before the wind and sea, and hove about twenty-five tons of cargo overboard to lighten the ship forward. Slung myself in a bowline, and by means of thrusting 2½-inch rope in the opening, contrived to stop a great portion of the leak.

"*December 16th.*—The crew continuing night and day at the pumps, could not keep the ship free; deemed it prudent for the benefit of those concerned to bear up for the nearest port. On arriving in lat. 48° 45′ N., long. 23° W., observed a vessel with a signal of distress flying. Made towards her, when she proved to be the barque *Carleton*, water-logged. The captain and crew asked to be taken off. Hove to, and received them on board, consisting of thirteen men: and their ship was abandoned. We then proceeded on our course, the crew of the abandoned vessel assisting all they could to keep my ship afloat. We arrived at Cork harbour on the 27th ult."

Captain Coulson, master of the brig *Othello*, reports that his brig foundered off Portland, December 27;—encountering a strong gale, and shipping two heavy seas in succession, which hove the ship on her beam-ends.

"Observing no chance of saving the ship, took to the long-boat, and within ten minutes of leaving her saw the brig founder. We were picked up the same morning by the French ship *Commerce de Paris*, Captain Tombarel."

Here, in a single column of a newspaper, what strange touching pictures do we find of seamen's dangers, vicissitudes, gallantry, generosity! The ship on fire—the captain in the gale slinging himself in a bowline to stop the leak—the Frenchman in the hour

of danger coming to his British comrade's rescue—the brigantine, almost a wreck, working up to the barque, with the signal of distress flying, and taking off her crew of thirteen men.

"We then proceeded on our course, *the crew of the abandoned vessel assisting all they could to keep my ship afloat.*"

What noble simple words! What courage, devotedness, brotherly love! Do they not cause the heart to beat and the eyes to fill?

This is what seamen do daily, and for one another. One lights occasionally upon different stories. It happened, not very long since, that the passengers by one of the great ocean steamers were wrecked, and, after undergoing the most severe hardships, were left, destitute and helpless, at a miserable coaling port. Amongst them were old men, ladies, and children. When the next steamer arrived, the passengers by that steamer took alarm at the haggard and miserable appearance of their unfortunate predecessors, and actually *remonstrated with their own captain, urging him not to take the poor creatures on board.* There was every excuse of course. The last arrived steamer was already dangerously full: the cabins were crowded; there were sick and delicate people on board—sick and delicate people who had paid a large price to the Company for room, food, comfort, already not too sufficient. If fourteen of us are in an omnibus, will we see three or four women outside and say, "Come in, because this is the last 'bus, and it rains"? Of course not: but think of that remonstrance, and of that Samaritan master of the *Purchase* brigantine!

In the winter of '53, I went from Marseilles to Civita Vecchia in one of the magnificent P. and O. ships, the *Valetta*, the master of which subsequently did distinguished service in the Crimea. This was his first Mediterranean voyage, and he sailed his ship by the charts alone, going into each port as surely as any pilot. I remember walking the deck at night with this most skilful, gallant, well-bred, and well-educated gentleman, and the glow of eager enthusiasm with which he assented, when I asked him whether he did not think a RIBBON or ORDER would be welcome or useful in his service.

Why is there not an ORDER OF BRITANNIA for British seamen? In the Merchant and the Royal Navy alike, occur almost daily instances and occasions for the display of science, skill, bravery, fortitude in trying circumstances, resource in danger. In the first number of the *Cornhill Magazine*, a friend contributed a most touching story of the M'Clintock expedition, in the dangers and

dreadful glories of which he shared ; and the writer was a merchant captain. How many more are there (and, for the honour of England, may there be many like him !)—gallant, accomplished, high-spirited, enterprising masters of their noble profession ! Can our fountain of Honour not be brought to such men? It plays upon captains and colonels in seemly profusion. It pours forth not illiberal rewards upon doctors and judges. It sprinkles mayors and aldermen. It bedews a painter now and again. It has spirted a baronetcy upon two, and bestowed a coronet upon one noble man of letters. Diplomatists take their Bath in it as of right ; and it flings out a profusion of glittering stars upon the nobility of the three kingdoms. Cannot Britannia find a ribbon for her sailors? The Navy, Royal or mercantile, is a *Service*. The command of a ship, or the conduct of her, implies danger, honour, science, skill, subordination, good faith. It may be a victory, such as that of the *Sarah Sands ;* it may be discovery, such as that of the *Fox ;* it may be heroic disaster, such as that of the *Birkenhead ;* and in such events merchant seamen, as well as Royal seamen, take their share.

Why is there not, then, an Order of Britannia? One day a young officer of the *Euryalus* * may win it ; and, having just read the memoirs of Lord Dundonald, I know who ought to have the first Grand Cross.

* Prince Alfred was serving on board the frigate *Euryalus* when this was written.

ON SOME LATE GREAT VICTORIES

ON the 18th day of April last I went to see a friend in a neighbouring Crescent, and on the steps of the next house beheld a group something like that depicted on the next page. A newsboy had stopped in his walk, and was reading aloud the journal which it was his duty to deliver; a pretty orange-girl, with a heap of blazing fruit, rendered more brilliant by one of those great blue papers in which oranges are now artfully wrapped, leant over the railing and listened; and opposite the *nympham discentem* there was a capering and acute-eared young satirist of a crossing-sweeper, who had left his neighbouring professional avocation and chance of profit, in order to listen to the tale of the little newsboy.

That intelligent reader, with his hand following the line as he read it out to his audience, was saying:—"And—now—Tom—coming up smiling—after his fall—dee—delivered a rattling clinker upon the Benicia Boy's—potato-trap—but was met by a—punisher on the nose—which," &c. &c.; or words to that effect. Betty at 52 let me in, while the boy was reading his lecture; and, having been some twenty minutes or so in the house, and paid my visit, I took leave.

The little lecturer was still at work on the 51 doorstep, and his audience had scarcely changed their position. Having read every word of the battle myself in the morning, I did not stay to listen further; but if the gentleman who expected his paper at the usual hour that day experienced delay and a little disappointment, I shall not be surprised.

I am not going to expatiate on the battle. I have read in the correspondent's letter of a Northern newspaper, that in the midst of the company assembled the reader's humble servant was present, and in a very polite society, too, of "poets, clergymen, men of letters, and members of both Houses of Parliament." If so, I must have walked to the station in my sleep, paid three guineas in a profound fit of mental abstraction, and returned to bed unconscious, for I certainly woke there about the time when history relates that the fight was over. I do not know whose colours I wore—the Benician's, or those of the English champion; nor remember where

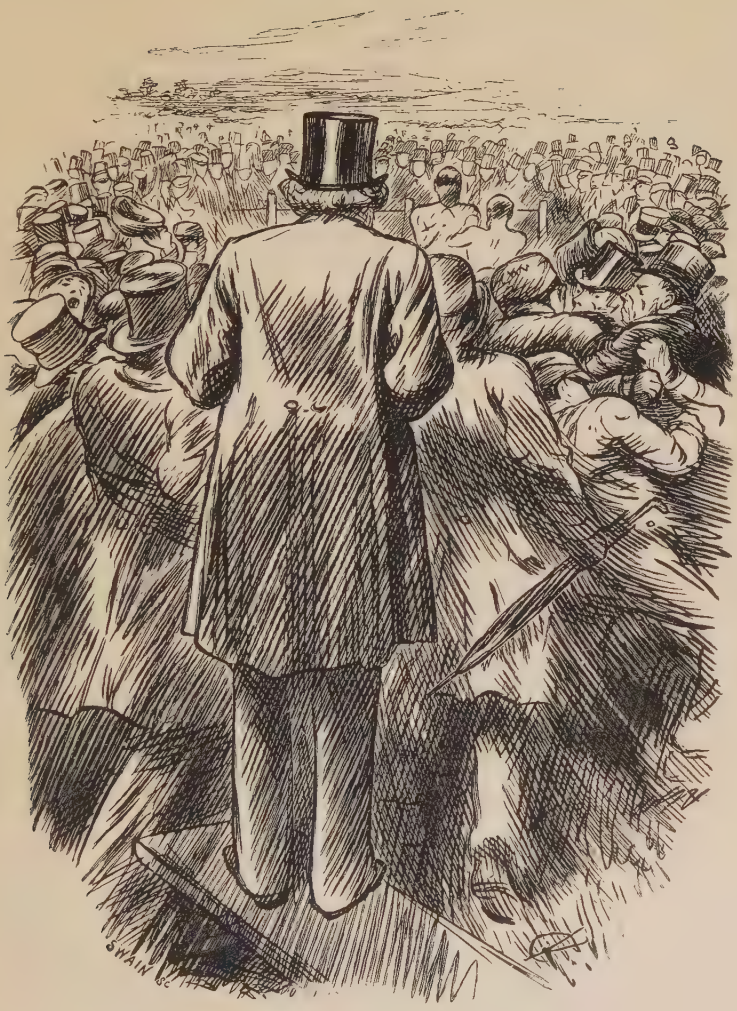
the fight took place, which, indeed, no somnambulist is bound to recollect. Ought Mr. Sayers to be honoured for being brave, or punished for being naughty? By the shade of Brutus the elder, I don't know.

In George II.'s time, there was a turbulent navy lieutenant (Handsome Smith he was called—his picture is at Greenwich now, in brown velvet, and gold and scarlet; his coat handsome, his waistcoat exceedingly handsome; but his face by no means the

beauty)—there was, I say, a turbulent young lieutenant who was broke on a complaint of the French ambassador, for obliging a French ship of war to lower her topsails to his ship at Spithead. But, by the King's orders, Tom was next day made Captain Smith. Well, if I were absolute king, I would send Tom Sayers to the mill for a month, and make him Sir Thomas on coming out of Clerkenwell. You are a naughty boy, Tom! but then, you know, we ought to love our brethren, though ever so naughty. We are moralists,

and reprimand you; and you are hereby reprimanded accordingly. But in case England should ever have need of a few score thousand champions, who laugh at danger; who cope with giants; who, stricken to the ground, jump up and gaily rally, and fall, and rise again, and strike, and die rather than yield—in case the country should need such men, and you should know them, be pleased to send lists of the misguided persons to the principal police stations, where means may some day be found to utilise their wretched powers, and give their deplorable energies a right direction. Suppose, Tom, that you and your friends are pitted against an immense invader—suppose you are bent on holding the ground, and dying there, if need be—suppose it is life, freedom, honour, home, you are fighting for, and there is a death-dealing sword or rifle in your hand, with which you are going to resist some tremendous enemy who challenges your championship on your native shore? Then, Sir Thomas, resist him to the death, and it is all right: kill him, and Heaven bless you. Drive him into the sea, and there destroy, smash, and drown him; and let us sing *Laudamus*. In these national cases, you see, we override the indisputable first laws of morals. Loving your neighbour is very well; but suppose your neighbour comes over from Calais and Boulogne to rob you of your laws, your liberties, your newspapers, your parliament (all of which *some* dear neighbours of ours have given up in the most self-denying manner): suppose any neighbour were to cross the water and propose this kind of thing to us? Should we not be justified in humbly trying to pitch him into the water? If it were the King of Belgium himself, we must do so. I mean that fighting, of course, is wrong; but that there are occasions when, &c.—I suppose I mean that that one-handed fight of Sayers is one of the most spirit-stirring little stories ever told: and with every love and respect for Morality—my spirit says to her, "Do, for goodness' sake, my dear madam, keep your true, and pure, and womanly, and gentle remarks for another day. Have the great kindness to stand a *leetle* aside, and just let us see one or two more rounds between the men. That little man with the one hand powerless on his breast facing yonder giant for hours, and felling him, too, every now and then! It is the little 'Java' and the 'Constitution' over again."

I think it is a most fortunate event for the brave Heenan, who has acted and written since the battle with a true warrior's courtesy and with a great deal of good logic too, that the battle was a drawn one. The advantage was all on Mr. Sayers's side. Say a young lad of sixteen insults me in the street, and I try and thrash him, and do it. Well, I have thrashed a young lad. You great big tyrant, couldn't you hit one of your own size? But say the lad



A GREAT BATTLE.

thrashes me? In either case I walk away discomfited: but in the latter, I am positively put to shame. Now, when the ropes were cut from that death-grip, and Sir Thomas released, the gentleman of Benicia was confessedly blind of one eye, and speedily afterwards was blind of both. Could Mr. Sayers have held out for three minutes, for five minutes, for ten minutes more? He says he could. So we say *we* could have held out, and did, and had beaten off the enemy at Waterloo, even if the Prussians hadn't come up. The opinions differ pretty much according to the nature of the opinants. I say the Duke and Tom could have held out, that they meant to hold out, that they did hold out, and that there has been fistifying enough. That crowd which came in and stopped the fight ought to be considered like one of those divine clouds which the gods send in Homer:—

> "Apollo shrouds
> The godlike Trojan in a veil of clouds."

It is the best way of getting the god-like Trojan out of the scrape, don't you see? The *nodus* is cut; Tom is out of chancery; the Benicia Boy not a bit the worse, nay, better than if he had beaten the little man. He has not the humiliation of conquest. He is greater, and will be loved more hereafter by the gentle sex. Suppose he had overcome the god-like Trojan? Suppose he had tied Tom's corpse to his cab-wheels, and driven to Farnham, smoking the pipe of triumph? Faugh! the great hulking conqueror! Why did you not hold your hand from yonder hero? Everybody, I say, was relieved by that opportune appearance of the British gods, protectors of native valour, who interfered, and "withdrew" their champion.

Now, suppose six-feet-two conqueror, and five-feet-eight beaten; would Sayers have been a whit the less gallant and meritorious? If Sancho had been allowed *really* to reign in Barataria, I make no doubt that, with his good sense and kindness of heart, he would have devised some means of rewarding the brave vanquished, as well as the brave victors in the Baratarian army, and that a champion who had fought a good fight would have been a knight of King Don Sancho's orders, whatever the upshot of the combat had been. Suppose Wellington overwhelmed on the plateau of Mont Saint Jean; suppose Washington attacked and beaten at Valley Forge—and either supposition is quite easy—and what becomes of the heroes? They would have been as brave, honest, heroic, wise; but their glory, where would it have been? Should we have had their portraits hanging in our chambers? have been familiar with their histories? have pondered over their letters,

common lives, and daily sayings? There is not only merit, but luck, which goes to making a hero out of a gentleman. Mind, please you, I am not saying that the hero is after all not so very heroic; and have not the least desire to grudge him his merit because of his good fortune.

Have you any idea whither this Roundabout Essay on some late great victories is tending? Do you suppose that by those words I mean Trenton, Brandywine, Salamanca, Vittoria, and so forth? By a great victory I can't mean that affair at Farnham, for it was a drawn fight. Where, then, are the victories, pray, and when are we coming to them?

My good sir, you will perceive that in this Nicæan discourse I have only as yet advanced as far as this—that a hero, whether he wins or loses, is a hero; and that if a fellow will but be honest and courageous, and do his best, we are for paying all honour to him. Furthermore, it has been asserted that Fortune has a good deal to do with the making of heroes; and thus hinted for the consolation of those who don't happen to be engaged in any stupendous victories, that, had opportunity so served, they might have been heroes too. If you are not, friend, it is not your fault, whilst I don't wish to detract from any gentleman's reputation who is. There! My worst enemy can't take objection to that. The point might have been put more briefly perhaps; but, if you please, we will not argue that question.

Well, then. The victories which I wish especially to commemorate in this paper, are the six great, complete, prodigious, and undeniable victories, achieved by the corps which the editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* has the honour to command. When I seemed to speak disparagingly but now of generals, it was that chief I had in my I (if you will permit me the expression). I wished him not to be elated by too much prosperity; I warned him against assuming heroic imperatorial airs, and cocking his laurels too jauntily over his ear. I was his conscience, and stood on the splash-board of his triumph-car, whispering, "Hominem memento te." As we rolled along the way, and passed the weathercocks on the temples, I saluted the symbol of the goddess Fortune with a reverent awe. "We have done our little endeavour," I said, bowing my head, "and mortals can do no more. But we might have fought bravely, and *not* won. We might have cast the coin, calling 'Head,' and lo! Tail might have come uppermost." O thou Ruler of Victories! —thou Awarder of Fame!—thou Giver of Crowns (and shillings)—if thou hast smiled upon us, shall we not be thankful? There is a Saturnine philosopher, standing at the door of his book-shop, who, I fancy, has a pooh-pooh expression as the triumph passes. (I

can't see quite clearly for the laurels, which have fallen down over my nose.) One hand is reining in the two white elephants that draw the car; I raise the other hand up to—to the laurels, and pass on, waving him a graceful recognition. Up the Hill of Ludgate—around the Pauline Square—by the side of Chepe—until it reaches our own Hill of Corn—the procession passes. The Imperator is bowing to the people; the captains of the legions are riding round the car, their gallant minds struck by the thought, "Have we not fought as well as yonder fellow, swaggering in the chariot, and are we not as good as he?" Granted, with all my heart, my dear lads. When your consulship arrives, may you be as fortunate. When these hands, now growing old, shall lay down sword and truncheon, may you mount the car, and ride to the temple of Jupiter. Be yours the laurel then. *Neque me myrtus dedecet*, looking cosily down from the arbour where I sit under the arched vine.

I fancy the Imperator standing on the steps of the temple (erected by Titus) on the Mons Frumentarius, and addressing the citizens: "Quirites!" he says, "in our campaign of six months, we have been engaged six times, and in each action have taken near upon a *hundred thousand prisoners*. Go to! What are other magazines compared to our magazine? (Sound, trumpeter!) What banner is there like that of Cornhill? You, philosopher yonder!" (he shirks under his mantle). "Do you know what it is to have a hundred and ten thousand readers? A hundred thousand readers? a hundred thousand *buyers!*" (Cries of "No!" "Pooh!" "Yes, upon my honour!" "Oh, come!" and murmurs of applause and derision)—"I say more than a hundred thousand purchasers—and I believe *as much as a million* readers!" (Immense sensation.) "To these have we said an unkind word? We have enemies; have we hit them an unkind blow? Have we sought to pursue party aims, to forward private jobs, to advance selfish schemes? The only persons to whom wittingly we have given pain are some who have volunteered for our corps—and of these volunteers we have had *thousands*." (Murmurs and grumbles.) "What commander, citizens, could place all these men—could make officers of all these men?" (cries of "No—no!" and laughter)—"could say, 'I accept this recruit, though he is too short for our standard, because he is poor, and has a mother at home who wants bread?' could enrol this other, who is too weak to bear arms, because he says, 'Look, sir, I shall be stronger anon.' The leader of such an army as ours must select his men, not because they are good and virtuous, but because they are strong and capable. To these our ranks are ever open, and in addition to the warriors who surround me"—(the generals look proudly conscious)—"I tell you, citizens, that I am

in treaty with other and most tremendous champions, who will march by the side of our veterans to the achievement of fresh victories. Now, blow trumpets! Bang, ye gongs! and drummers, drub the thundering skins! Generals and chiefs, we go to sacrifice to the gods."

Crowned with flowers, the captains enter the temple, the other Magazines walking modestly behind them. The people huzza; and, in some instances, kneel and kiss the fringes of the robes of the warriors. The Philosopher puts up his shutters, and retires into his shop, deeply moved. In ancient times Pliny (*apud* Smith) relates it was the custom of the Imperator "to paint his whole body a bright red;" and, also, on ascending the Hill, to have some of the hostile chiefs led aside "to the adjoining prison, and put to death." We propose to dispense with both these ceremonies.

THORNS IN THE CUSHION

IN the first of these Essays, the *Cornhill Magazine* was likened to a ship sailing forth on her voyage, and the captain uttered a very sincere prayer for her prosperity. The dangers of storm and rock, the vast outlay upon ship and cargo, and the certain risk of the venture, gave the chief officer a feeling of no small anxiety; for who could say from what quarter danger might arise, and how his owner's property might be imperilled? After a six months' voyage, we with very thankful hearts could acknowledge our good fortune: and, taking up the apologue in the Roundabout manner, we composed a triumphal procession in honour of the Magazine, and imagined the Imperator thereof riding in a sublime car to return thanks in the Temple of Victory. Cornhill is accustomed to grandeur and greatness, and has witnessed, every ninth of November, for I don't know how many centuries, a prodigious annual pageant, chariot, progress, and flourish of trumpetry; and being so very near the Mansion House, I am sure the reader will understand how the idea of pageant and procession came naturally to my mind. The imagination easily supplied a gold coach, eight cream-coloured horses of your true Pegasus breed, huzzaying multitudes, running footmen, and clanking knights in armour, a chaplain and a sword-bearer with a muff on his head, scowling out of the coach window, and a Lord Mayor all crimson, fur, gold-chain, and white ribbons, solemnly occupying the place of state. A playful fancy could have carried the matter farther, could have depicted the feast in the Egyptian Hall, the Ministers, Chief Justices, and right reverend prelates taking their seats round about his Lordship, the turtle and other delicious viands, and Mr. Toole behind the central throne, bawling out to the assembled guests and dignitaries: "My Lord So-and-so, My Lord What-d'ye-call-'im, my Lord Etcætera, the Lord Mayor pledges you all in a loving cup." Then the noble proceedings come to an end; Lord Simper proposes the ladies; the company rises from table, and adjourns to coffee and muffins. The carriages of the nobility and guests roll back to the West. The Egyptian Hall, so bright just now, appears in a

twilight glimmer, in which waiters are seen ransacking the dessert, and rescuing the spoons. His Lordship and the Lady Mayoress go into their private apartments. The robes are doffed, the collar and white ribbons are removed. The Mayor becomes a man, and is pretty surely in a fluster about the speeches which he has just uttered; remembering too well now, wretched creature, the principal points which he *didn't* make when he rose to speak. He goes to bed to headache, to care, to repentance, and, I daresay, to a dose of something which his body physician has prescribed for him. And there are ever so many men in the City who fancy that man happy!

Now, suppose that all through that 9th of November his Lordship has had a racking rheumatism, or a toothache, let us say, during all dinner-time—through which he has been obliged to grin and mumble his poor old speeches. Is he enviable? Would you like to change with his Lordship? Suppose that bumper which his golden footman brings him, instead i'fackins of ypocras or canary, containss ome abomination of senna? Away! Remove the golden goblet, insidious cup-bearer! You now begin to perceive the gloomy moral which I am about to draw.

Last month we sang the song of glorification, and rode in the chariot of triumph. It was all very well. It was right to huzza, and be thankful, and cry, Bravo, our side! and besides, you know, there was the enjoyment of thinking how pleased Brown, and Jones, and Robinson (our dear friends) would be at this announcement of success. But now that the performance is over, my good sir, just step into my private room, and see that it is not all pleasure—this winning of successes. Cast your eye over those newspapers, over those letters. See what the critics say of your harmless jokes, neat little trim sentences, and pet waggeries! Why, you are no better than an idiot; you are drivelling; your powers have left you; this always overrated writer is rapidly sinking to——, &c.

This is not pleasant; but neither is this the point. It may be the critic is right, and the author wrong. It may be that the archbishop's sermon is not so fine as some of those discourses twenty years ago which used to delight the faithful in Granada. Or it may be (pleasing thought!) that the critic is a dullard, and does not understand what he is writing about. Everybody who has been to an exhibition has heard visitors discoursing about the pictures before their faces. One says, "This is very well;" another says, "This is stuff and rubbish;" another cries, "Bravo! this is a masterpiece:" and each has a right to his opinion. For example, one of the pictures I admired most at the Royal Academy is by a

gentleman on whom I never, to my knowledge, set eyes. This picture is No. 346, "Moses," by Mr. S. Solomon. I thought it had a great intention, I thought it finely drawn and composed. It nobly represented, to my mind, the dark children of the Egyptian bondage, and suggested the touching story. My newspaper says: "Two ludicrously ugly women, looking at a dingy baby, do not form a pleasing object;" and so good-bye, Mr. Solomon. Are not most of our babies served so in life? and doesn't Mr. Robinson consider Mr. Brown's cherub an ugly squalling little brat? So cheer up, Mr. S. S. It may be the critic who discoursed on your baby is a bad judge of babies. When Pharaoh's kind daughter found the child, and cherished and loved it, and took it home, and found a nurse for it, too, I daresay there were grim, brickdust-coloured chamberlains, or some of the tough, old, meagre, yellow princesses at Court, who never had children themselves, who cried out, "Faugh! the horrid little squalling wretch!" and knew he would never come to good; and said, "Didn't I tell you so?" when he assaulted the Egyptian.

Never mind then, Mr. S. Solomon, I say, because a critic pooh-poohs your work of art—your Moses—your child—your foundling. Why, did not a wiseacre in *Blackwood's Magazine* lately fall foul of "Tom Jones"? O hypercritic! So, to be sure, did good old Mr. Richardson, who could write novels himself; but you, and I, and Mr. Gibbon, my dear sir, agree in giving our respect, and wonder, and admiration, to the brave old master.

In these last words I am supposing the respected reader to be endowed with a sense of humour, which he may or may not possess; indeed, don't we know many an honest man who can no more comprehend a joke than he can turn a tune? But I take for granted, my dear sir, that you are brimming over with fun—you mayn't make jokes, but you could if you would—you know you could: and in your quiet way you enjoy them extremely. Now many people neither make them, nor understand them when made, nor like them when understood, and are suspicious, testy, and angry with jokers. Have you ever watched an elderly male or female—an elderly "party," so to speak, who begins to find out that some young wag of the company is "chaffing" him? Have you ever tried the sarcastic or Socratic method with a child? Little simple he or she, in the innocence of the simple heart, plays some silly freak, or makes some absurd remark, which you turn to ridicule. The little creature dimly perceives that you are making fun of him, writhes, blushes, grows uneasy, bursts into tears,—upon my word it is not fair to try the weapon of ridicule upon that innocent young victim. The awful objurgatory practice he is accustomed to.

Point out his fault, and lay bare the dire consequences thereof: expose it roundly, and give him a proper, solemn, moral whipping—but do not attempt to *castigare ridendo*. Do not laugh at him writhing, and cause all the other boys in the school to laugh. Remember your own young days at school, my friend—the tingling cheeks, burning ears, bursting heart, and passion of desperate tears, with which you looked up, after having performed some blunder, whilst the Doctor held you to public scorn before the class, and cracked his great clumsy jokes upon you—helpless, and a prisoner! Better the block itself, and the lictors, with their fasces of birch-twigs, than the maddening torture of those jokes!

Now, with respect to jokes—and the present company of course excepted—many people, perhaps most people, are as infants. They have little sense of humour. They don't like jokes. Raillery in writing annoys and offends them. The coarseness apart, I think I have met very very few women who liked the banter of Swift and Fielding. Their simple tender natures revolt at laughter. Is the satyr always a wicked brute at heart, and are they rightly shocked at his grin, his leer, his horns, hoofs, and ears? *Fi donc, le vilain monstre*, with his shrieks, and his capering crooked legs! Let him go and get a pair of well-wadded black silk stockings, and pull them over those horrid shanks; put a large gown and bands over beard and hide; and pour a dozen of lavender-water into his lawn handkerchief, and cry, and never make a joke again. It shall all be highly-distilled poesy, and perfumed sentiment, and gushing eloquence; and the foot *shan't* peep out, and a plague take it. Cover it up with the surplice. Out with your cambric, dear ladies, and let us all whimper together.

Now, then, hand on heart, we declare that it is not the fire of adverse critics which afflicts or frightens the editorial bosom. They may be right; they may be rogues who have a personal spite; they may be dullards who kick and bray as their nature is to do, and prefer thistles to pineapples; they may be conscientious, acute, deeply learned, delightful judges, who see your joke in a moment, and the profound wisdom lying underneath. Wise or dull, laudatory or otherwise, we put their opinions aside. If they applaud, we are pleased: if they shake their quick pens, and fly off with a hiss, we resign their favours and put on all the fortitude we can muster. I would rather have the lowest man's good word than his bad one, to be sure; but as for coaxing a compliment, or wheedling him into good-humour, or stopping his angry mouth with a good dinner, or accepting his contributions for a certain Magazine, for fear of his barking or snapping elsewhere—*allons donc!* These shall not be our acts. Bow-wow, Cerberus! Here shall be no sop

for thee, unless—unless Cerberus is an uncommonly good dog, when we shall bear no malice because he flew at us from our neighbour's gate.

What, then, is the main grief you spoke of as annoying you—the toothache in the Lord Mayor's jaw, the thorn in the cushion of the editorial chair? It is there. Ah! it stings me now as I write. It comes with almost every morning's post. At night I come home, and take my letters up to bed (not daring to open them), and in the morning I find one, two, three thorns on my pillow. Three I extracted yesterday; two I found this morning. They don't sting quite so sharply as they did; but a skin is a skin, and they bite, after all, most wickedly. It is all very fine to advertise on the Magazine, "Contributions are only to be sent to Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co., and not to the Editor's private residence." My dear sir, how little you know man- or woman-kind, if you fancy they will take that sort of warning! How am I to know (though, to be sure, I begin to know now), as I take the letters off the tray, which of those envelopes contains a real *bonâ fide* letter, and which a thorn? One of the best invitations this year I mistook for a thorn-letter, and kept it without opening. This is what I call a thorn-letter:—

"CAMBERWELL: *June* 4.

"SIR,—May I hope, may I entreat, that you will favour me by perusing the enclosed lines, and that they may be found worthy of insertion in the *Cornhill Magazine?* We have known better days, sir. I have a sick and widowed mother to maintain, and little brothers and sisters who look to me. I do my utmost as a governess to support them. I toil at night when they are at rest, and my own hand and brain are alike tired. If I could add but *a little* to our means by my pen, many of my poor invalid's wants might be supplied, and I could procure for her comforts to which she is now a stranger. Heaven knows it is not for want of *will* or for want of *energy* on my part that she is now in ill-health, and our little household almost without bread. Do—do cast a kind glance over my poem, and if you can help us, the widow, the orphans will bless you!—I remain, sir, in anxious expectancy, your faithful servant, S. S. S."

And enclosed is a little poem or two, and an envelope with its penny stamp—Heaven help us!—and the writer's name and address.

Now you see what I mean by a thorn. Here is the case put with true female logic. "I am poor; I am good; I am ill; I

work hard; I have a sick mother and hungry brothers and sisters dependent on me. You can help us if you will." And then I look at the paper, with the thousandth part of a faint hope that it may be suitable, and I find it won't do: and I knew it wouldn't do: and why is this poor lady to appeal to my pity and bring her poor little ones kneeling to my bedside, and calling for bread which I can give them if I choose? No day passes but that argument *ad misericordiam* is used. Day and night that sad voice is crying out for help. Thrice it appealed to me yesterday. Twice this morning it cried to me: and I have no doubt when I go to get my hat, I shall find it with its piteous face and its pale family about it, waiting for me in the hall. One of the immense advantages which women have over our sex is, that they actually like to read these letters. Like letters? Oh mercy on us! Before I was an editor I did not like the postman much:—but now!

A very common way with these petitioners is to begin with a fine flummery about the merits and eminent genius of the person whom they are addressing. But this artifice, I state publicly, is of no avail. When I see *that* kind of herb, I know the snake within it, and fling it away before it has time to sting. Away, reptile, to the waste-paper basket, and thence to the flames!

But of these disappointed people, some take their disappointment and meekly bear it. Some hate and hold you their enemy because you could not be their friend. Some, furious and envious, say: "Who is this man who refuses what I offer? and how dares he, the conceited coxcomb, to deny my merit?"

Sometimes my letters contain not mere thorns, but bludgeons. Here are two choice slips from that noble Irish oak which has more than once supplied alpeens for this meek and unoffending skull:—

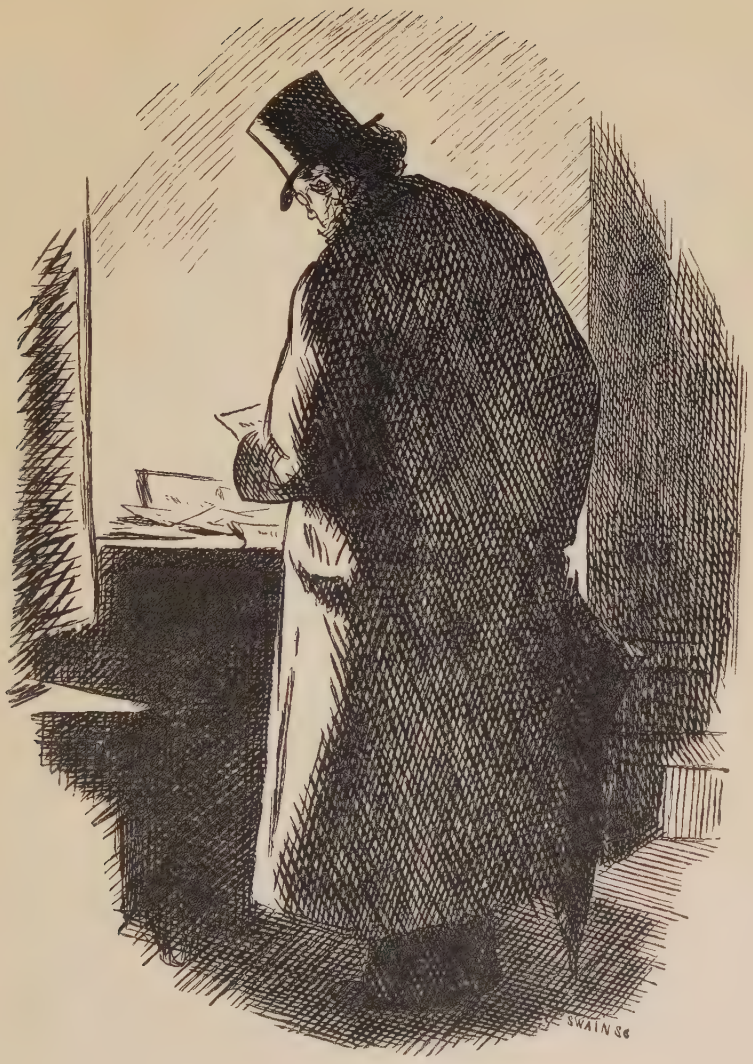
"Theatre Royal, Donnybrook.

"Sir,—I have just finished reading the first portion of your Tale, 'Lovel the Widower,' and am much surprised at the unwarrantable strictures you pass therein on the *corps de ballet*.

"I have been for more than ten years connected with the theatrical profession, and I beg to assure you that the majority of the *corps de ballet* are virtuous well-conducted girls, and, consequently, that snug cottages are not taken for them in the Regent's Park.

"I also have to inform you that theatrical managers are in the habit of speaking good English, possibly better English than authors.

"You either know nothing of the subject in question, or you assert a wilful falsehood.



THE EVENING POST.

"I am happy to say that the characters of the *corps de ballet*, as also those of actors and actresses, are superior to the snarlings of dyspeptic libellers, or the spiteful attacks and *brutum fulmen* of ephemeral authors.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

"A. B. C.

"The Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*."

"Theatre Royal, Donnybrook.

"Sir,—I have just read, in the *Cornhill Magazine* for January, the first portion of a Tale written by you, and entitled 'Lovel the Widower.'

"In the production in question you employ all your malicious spite (and you have great capabilities that way) in trying to degrade the character of the *corps de ballet*. When you imply that the majority of ballet-girls have villas taken for them in the Regent's Park, *I say you tell a deliberate falsehood.*

"Haveing been brought up to the stage from infancy, and, though now an actress, haveing been seven years principal dancer at the opera, I am competent to speak on the subject. I am only surprised that so vile a libeller as yourself should be allowed to preside at the Dramatic Fund dinner on the 22nd instant. I think it would be much better if you were to reform your own life, instead of telling lies of those who are immeasurably your superiors.—Yours in supreme disgust, A. D."

The signatures of the respected writers are altered, and for the site of their Theatre Royal an adjacent place is named, which (as I may have been falsely informed) used to be famous for quarrels, thumps, and broken heads. But, I say, is this an easy chair to sit on, when you are liable to have a pair of such shillelaghs flung at it? And, prithee, what was all the quarrel about? In the little history of "Lovel the Widower" I described, and brought to condign punishment, a certain wretch of a ballet-dancer, who lived splendidly for a while on ill-gotten gains, had an accident, and lost her beauty, and died poor, deserted, ugly, and every way odious. In the same page, other little ballet-dancers are described, wearing homely clothing, doing their duty, and carrying their humble savings to the family at home. But nothing will content my dear correspondents but to have me declare that the majority of ballet-dancers have villas in the Regent's Park, and to convict me of "deliberate falsehood." Suppose, for instance, I had chosen to introduce a red-haired washerwoman into a story? I might get an expostulatory letter saying, "Sir, in stating that the majority of washerwomen are red-haired, you are a liar! and you had best

not speak of ladies who are immeasurably your superiors." Or suppose I had ventured to describe an illiterate haberdasher? One of the craft might write to me, "Sir, in describing haberdashers as illiterate, you utter a wilful falsehood. Haberdashers use much better English than authors." It is a mistake, to be sure. I have never said what my correspondents say I say. There is the text under their noses, but what if they choose to read it their own way? "Hurroo, lads! Here's for a fight. There's a bald head peeping out of the hut. There's a bald head! It must be Tim Malone's." And whack! come down both the bludgeons at once.

Ah me! we wound where we never intended to strike; we create anger where we never meant harm; and these thoughts are the thorns in our Cushion. Out of mere malignity, I suppose, there is no man who would like to make enemies. But here, in this editorial business, you can't do otherwise: and a queer, sad, strange, bitter thought it is, that must cross the mind of many a public man: "Do what I will, be innocent or spiteful, be generous or cruel, there are A and B, and C and D, who will hate me to the end of the chapter—to the chapter's end—to the Finis of the page—when hate, and envy, and fortune, and disappointment shall be over."

ON SCREENS IN DINING-ROOMS

A GRANDSON of the late Rev. Dr. Primrose (of Wakefield, vicar) wrote me a little note from his country living this morning, and the kind fellow had the precaution to write "No thorn" upon the envelope, so that, ere I broke the seal, my mind might be relieved of any anxiety lest the letter should contain one of those lurking stabs which are so painful to the present gentle writer. Your epigraph, my dear P., shows your kind and artless nature; but don't you see it is of no use? People who are bent upon assassinating you in the manner mentioned will write "No thorn" upon their envelopes too; and you open the case, and presently out flies a poisoned stiletto, which springs into a man's bosom, and makes the wretch howl with anguish. When the bailiffs are after a man, they adopt all sorts of disguises, pop out on him from all conceivable corners, and tap his miserable shoulder. His wife is taken ill; his sweetheart, who remarked his brilliant, too brilliant appearance at the Hyde Park review, will meet him at Cremorne, or where you will. The old friend who has owed him that money these five years will meet him at So-and-so and pay. By one bait or other the victim is hooked, netted, landed, and down goes the basket-lid. It is not your wife, your sweetheart, your friend, who is going to pay you. It is Mr. Nab the bailiff. *You* know——you are caught. You are off in a cab to Chancery Lane.

You know, I say? *Why* should you know? I make no manner of doubt you never were taken by a bailiff in your life. I never was. I have been in two or three debtors' prisons, but not on my own account. Goodness be praised! I mean you can't escape your lot; and Nab only stands here metaphorically as the watchful, certain, and untiring officer of Mr. Sheriff Fate. Why, my dear Primrose, this morning along with your letter comes another, bearing the well-known superscription of another old friend, which I open without the least suspicion, and what do I find? A few lines from my friend Johnson, it is true, but they are written on a page covered with feminine handwriting. "Dear Mr. Johnson," says the

writer, "I have just been perusing with delight a most charming tale by the Archbishop of Cambray. It is called 'Telemachus'; and I think it would be admirably suited to the *Cornhill Magazine*. As you know the Editor, will you have the great kindness, dear Mr. Johnson, to communicate with him *personally* (as that is much better than writing in a roundabout way to the Publishers, and waiting goodness knows how long for an answer), and state my readiness to translate this excellent and instructive story? I do not wish to breathe *a word* against 'Lovel Parsonage,' 'Framley the Widower,' or any of the novels which have appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, but I *am sure* 'Telemachus' is as good as new to English readers, and in point of interest and morality *far*——" &c. &c. &c.

There it is. I am stabbed through Johnson. He has lent himself to this attack on me. He is weak about women. Other strong men are. He submits to the common lot, poor fellow. In my reply I do not use a word of unkindness. I write him back gently, that I fear "Telemachus" won't suit us. He can send the letter on to his fair correspondent. But however soft the answer, I question whether the wrath will be turned away. Will there not be a coolness between him and the lady? and is it not possible that henceforth her fine eyes will look with darkling glances upon the pretty orange cover of our Magazine?

Certain writers, they say, have a bad opinion of women. Now am I very whimsical in supposing that this disappointed candidate will be hurt at her rejection, and angry or cast down according to her nature? "Angry, indeed!" says Juno, gathering up her purple robes and Royal raiment. "Sorry, indeed!" cries Minerva, lacing on her corslet again, and scowling under her helmet. (I imagine the well-known Apple case has just been argued and decided.) "Hurt, forsooth! Do you suppose *we* care for the opinion of that hobnailed lout of a Paris? Do you suppose that I, the Goddess of Wisdom, can't make allowances for mortal ignorance, and am so base as to bear malice against a poor creature who knows no better? You little know the goddess nature when you dare to insinuate that our divine minds are actuated by motives so base. A love of justice influences *us*. We are above mean revenge. We are too magnanimous to be angry at the award of such a judge in favour of such a creature." And rustling out their skirts, the ladies walk away together. This is all very well. You are bound to believe them. They are actuated by no hostility: not they. They bear no malice —of course not. But when the Trojan war occurs presently, which side will they take? Many brave souls will be sent to Hades. Hector will perish. Poor old Priam's bald numskull will be cracked,

and Troy town will burn, because Paris prefers golden-haired Venus to ox-eyed Juno and grey-eyed Minerva.

The last Essay of this Roundabout Series, describing the griefs and miseries of the editorial chair, was written, as the kind reader will acknowledge, in a mild and gentle, not in a warlike or satirical spirit. I showed how cudgels were applied; but, surely, the meek object of persecution hit no blows in return. The beating did not hurt much, and the person assaulted could afford to keep his good-humour; indeed, I admired that brave though illogical little actress, of the T. R. D–bl–n, for her fiery vindication of her profession's honour. I assure her I had no intention to tell l—s—well, let us say, monosyllables—about my superiors: and I wish her nothing but well, and when Macmahon (or shall it be Mulligan?) *Roi d'Irlande* ascends his throne, I hope she may be appointed Professor of English to the princesses of the Royal house. *Nuper*—in former days—I too have militated; sometimes, as I now think, unjustly; but always, I vow, without personal rancour. Which of us has not idle words to recall, flippant jokes to regret? Have you never committed an imprudence? Have you never had a dispute, and found out that you were wrong? So much the worse for you. Woe be to the man *qui croit toujours avoir raison.* His anger is not a brief madness, but a permanent mania. His rage is not a fever-fit, but a black poison inflaming him, distorting his judgment, disturbing his rest, embittering his cup, gnawing at his pleasures, causing him more cruel suffering than ever he can inflict on his enemy. *O la belle morale!* As I write it, I think about one or two little affairs of my own. There is old Dr. Squaretoso (he certainly was very rude to me, and that's the fact); there is Madame Pomposa (and certainly her ladyship's behaviour was about as cool as cool could be). Never mind, old Squaretoso: never mind, Madame Pomposa! Here is a hand. Let us be friends, as we once were, and have no more of this rancour.

I had hardly sent that last Roundabout Paper to the printer (which, I submit, was written in a pacable and not unchristian frame of mind), when Saturday came, and with it, of course, my *Saturday Review.* I remember at New York coming down to breakfast at the hotel one morning, after a criticism had appeared in the *New York Herald*, in which an Irish writer had given me a dressing for a certain lecture on Swift. Ah! my dear little enemy of the T. R. D., what were the cudgels in *your* little *billet-doux* compared with those noble New York shillelaghs? All through the Union, the literary sons of Erin have marched *alpeen*-stock in hand, and in every city of the States they call each other and everybody else the finest names. Having come to breakfast,

then, in the public room, I sit down, and see—that the nine people opposite have all got *New York Heralds* in their hands. One dear little lady, whom I knew, and who sat opposite, gave a pretty blush, and popped her paper under the tablecloth. I told her I had had my whipping already in my own private room, and begged her to continue her reading. I may have undergone agonies, you see; but every man who has been bred at an English public school comes away from a private interview with Doctor Birch with a calm, even a smiling face. And this is not impossible, when you are prepared. You screw your courage up—you go through the business. You come back and take your seat on the form, showing not the least symptom of uneasiness or of previous unpleasantries. But to be caught suddenly up, and whipped in the bosom of your family—to sit down to breakfast, and cast your innocent eye on a paper, and find, before you are aware, that the *Saturday Monitor* or *Black Monday Instructor* has hoisted you and is laying on—that is indeed a trial. Or perhaps the family has looked at the dreadful paper beforehand, and weakly tries to hide it. "Where is the *Instructor*, or the *Monitor?*" say you. "Where is that paper?" says mamma to one of the young ladies. Lucy hasn't it. Fanny hasn't seen it. Emily thinks that the governess has it. At last, out it is brought, that awful paper! Papa is amazingly tickled with the article on Thomson; thinks that show-up of Johnson is very lively; and now—Heaven be good to us!—he has come to the critique on himself:—"Of all the rubbish which we have had from Mr. Tomkins, we do protest and vow that this last cartload is" &c. Ah! poor Tomkins!—but most of all, ah! poor Mrs. Tomkins, and poor Emily, and Fanny, and Lucy, who have to sit by and see *paterfamilias* put to the torture!

Now, on this eventful Saturday, I did not cry, because it was not so much the Editor as the Publisher of the *Cornhill Magazine* who was brought out for a dressing; and it is wonderful how gallantly one bears the misfortunes of one's friends. That a writer should be taken to task about his books is fair, and he must abide the praise or the censure. But that a publisher should be criticised for his dinners, and for the conversation which did *not* take place there,—is this tolerable press practice, legitimate joking, or honourable warfare? I have not the honour to know my next-door neighbour, but I make no doubt that he receives his friends at dinner; I see his wife and children pass constantly; I even know the carriages of some of the people who call upon him, and could tell their names. Now, suppose his servants were to tell mine what the doings are next door, who comes to dinner, what is eaten and said, and I were to publish an account of these transactions in

a newspaper, I could assuredly get money for the report; but ought I to write it, and what would you think of me for doing so?

And suppose, Mr. Saturday Reviewer—you *censor morum*, you who pique yourself (and justly and honourably in the main) upon your character of gentleman, as well as of writer,—suppose, not that you yourself invent and indite absurd twaddle about gentlemen's private meetings and transactions, but pick this wretched garbage out of a New York sheet, and hold it up for your readers' amusement—don't you think, my friend, that you might have been better employed? Here, in my *Saturday Review*, and in an American paper subsequently sent to me, I light, astonished, on an account of the dinners of my friend and publisher, which are described as "tremendously heavy," of the conversation (which does not take place), and of the guests assembled at the table. I am informed that the proprietor of the *Cornhill*, and the host on these occasions, is "a very good man, but totally unread;" and that on my asking him whether Doctor Johnson was dining behind the screen, he said, "God bless my soul, my dear sir, there's no person by the name of Johnson here, nor any one behind the screen," and that a roar of laughter cut him short. I am informed by the same New York correspondent that I have touched up a contributor's article; that I once said to a literary gentleman, who was proudly pointing to an anonymous article as his writing, "Ah! I thought I recognised *your hoof* in it." I am told by the same authority that the *Cornhill Magazine* "shows symptoms of being on the wane," and having sold nearly a hundred thousand copies, he (the correspondent) "should think forty thousand was now about the mark." Then the graceful writer passes on to the dinners, at which it appears the Editor of the Magazine "is the great gun, and comes out with all the geniality in his power."

Now suppose this charming intelligence is untrue? Suppose the publisher (to recall the words of my friend the Dublin actor of last month) is a gentleman to the full as well informed as those whom he invites to his table? Suppose he never made the remark, beginning "God bless my soul, my dear sir," &c., nor anything resembling it? Suppose nobody roared with laughing? Suppose the Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* never "touched up" one single line of the contribution which bears "marks of his hand"? Suppose he never said to any literary gentleman, "I recognised *your hoof*" in any periodical whatever? Suppose the forty thousand subscribers, which the writer to New York "considered to be about the mark," should be between ninety thousand and a hundred thousand (and as he will have figures, there they are)? Suppose this back-door gossip should be utterly blundering and untrue,

would any one wonder? Ah! if we had only enjoyed the happiness to number this writer among the contributors to our Magazine, what a cheerfulness and easy confidence his presence would impart to our meetings! He would find that "poor Mr. Smith" had heard that recondite anecdote of Doctor Johnson behind the screen; and as for "the great gun of those banquets," with what geniality should not I "come out" if I had an amiable companion close by me, dotting down my conversation for the *New York Times!*

Attack our books, Mr. Correspondent, and welcome. They are fair subjects for just censure or praise. But woe be to you, if you allow private rancours or animosities to influence you in the discharge of your public duty! In the little court where you are paid to sit as judge, as critic, you owe it to your employers, to your conscience, to the honour of your calling, to deliver just sentences; and you shall have to answer to Heaven for your dealings, as surely as my Lord Chief Justice on the Bench. The dignity of letters, the honour of the literary calling, the slights put by haughty and unthinking people upon literary men,—don't we hear outcries upon these subjects raised daily? As dear Sam Johnson sits behind the screen, too proud to show his threadbare coat and patches among the more prosperous brethren of his trade, there is no want of dignity in *him*, in that homely image of labour ill-rewarded, genius as yet unrecognised, independence sturdy and uncomplaining. But Mr. Nameless, behind the publisher's screen uninvited, peering at the company and the meal, catching up scraps of the jokes, and noting down the guests' behaviour and conversation—what a figure his is! *Allons*, Mr. Nameless! Put up your notebook; walk out of the hall; and leave gentlemen alone who would be private, and wish you no harm.

UNRECOGNISED GENIUS.

TUNBRIDGE TOYS

I WONDER whether those little silver pencil-cases with a movable almanack at the butt-end are still favourite implements with boys, and whether pedlars still hawk them about the country? Are there pedlars and hawkers still, or are rustics and children grown too sharp to deal with them? Those pencil-cases, as far as my memory serves me, were not of much use. The screw, upon which the movable almanack turned, was constantly getting loose. The 1 of the table would work from its moorings, under Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case might be, and you would find, on examination, that Th. or W. was the 23½ of the month (which was absurd on the face of the thing), and in a word your cherished pencil-case an utterly unreliable time-keeper. Nor was this a matter of wonder. Consider the position of a pencil-case in a boy's pocket. You had hardbake in it; marbles, kept in your purse when the money was all gone; your mother's purse, knitted so fondly and supplied with a little bit of gold, long since—prodigal little son!—scattered amongst the swine—I mean amongst brandy-balls, open tarts, three-cornered puffs, and similar abominations. You had a top and string; a knife; a piece of cobbler's wax; two or three bullets; a "Little Warbler"; and I, for my part, remember, for a considerable period, a brass-barrelled pocket-pistol (which would fire beautifully, for with it I shot off a button from Butt Major's jacket);—with all these things, and ever so many more, clinking and rattling in your pockets, and your hands, of course, keeping them in perpetual movement, how could you expect your movable almanack not to be twisted out of its place now and again—your pencil-case to be bent—your liquorice water not to leak out of your bottle over the cobbler's wax, your bull's-eyes not to ram up the lock and barrel of your pistol, and so forth?

In the month of June, thirty-seven years ago, I bought one of those pencil-cases from a boy whom I shall call Hawker, and who was in my form. Is he dead? Is he a millionaire? Is he a bankrupt now? He was an immense screw at school, and I believe to this day that the value of the thing for which I

owed and eventually paid three-and-sixpence, was in reality not one-and-nine.

I certainly enjoyed the case at first a good deal, and amused myself with twiddling round the movable calendar. But this pleasure wore off. The jewel, as I said, was not paid for, and Hawker, a large and violent boy, was exceedingly unpleasant as a creditor. His constant remark was, "When are you going to pay me that three-and-sixpence? What sneaks your relations must be! They come to see you. You go out to them on Saturdays and Sundays, and they never give you anything! Don't tell *me*, you little humbug!" and so forth. The truth is that my relations were respectable; but my parents were making a tour in Scotland; and my friends in London, whom I used to go and see, were most kind to me, certainly, but somehow never tipped me. That term, of May to August 1823, passed in agonies, then, in consequence of my debt to Hawker. What was the pleasure of a calendar pencil-case in comparison with the doubt and torture of mind occasioned by the sense of the debt, and the constant reproach in that fellow's scowling eyes and gloomy coarse reminders? How was I to pay off such a debt out of sixpence a week? ludicrous! Why did not some one come to see me, and tip me? Ah! my dear sir, if you have any little friends at school, go and see them, and do the natural thing by them. You won't miss the sovereign. You don't know what a blessing it will be to them. Don't fancy they are too old—try 'em. And they will remember you, and bless you in future days; and their gratitude shall accompany your dreary after life; and they shall meet you kindly when thanks for kindness are scant. Oh mercy! shall I ever forget that sovereign you gave me, Captain Bob? or the agonies of being in debt to Hawker? In that very term, a relation of mine was going to India. I actually was fetched from school in order to take leave of him. I am afraid I told Hawker of this circumstance. I own I speculated upon my friend's giving me a pound. A pound? Pooh! A relation going to India, and deeply affected at parting from his darling kinsman, might give five pounds to the dear fellow! . . . There was Hawker when I came back—of course there he was. As he looked in my scared face, his turned livid with rage. He muttered curses, terrible from the lips of so young a boy. My relation, about to cross the ocean to fill a lucrative appointment, asked me with much interest about my progress at school, heard me construe a passage of Eutropius, the pleasing Latin work on which I was then engaged; gave me a God bless you, and sent me back to school; upon my word of honour, without so much as a half-crown! It is all very well, my

dear sir, to say that boys contract habits of expecting tips from their parents' friends, that they become avaricious, and so forth. Avaricious! fudge! Boys contract habits of tart and toffee-eating, which they do not carry into after life. On the contrary, I wish I *did* like 'em. What raptures of pleasure one could have now for five shillings, if one could but pick it off the pastry-cook's tray! No. If you have any little friends at school, out with your half-crowns, my friend, and impart to those little ones the little fleeting joys of their age.

Well, then. At the beginning of August 1823, Bartlemytide holidays came, and I was to go to my parents, who were at Tunbridge Wells. My place in the coach was taken by my tutor's servants—"Bolt-in-Tun," Fleet Street, seven o'clock in the morning, was the word. My Tutor, the Reverend Edward P——, to whom I hereby present my best compliments, had a parting interview with me: gave me my little account for my governor: the remaining part of the coach-hire; five shillings for my own expenses; and some five-and-twenty shillings on an old account which had been overpaid, and was to be restored to my family.

Away I ran and paid Hawker his three-and-six. Ouf! what a weight it was off my mind! (He was a Norfolk boy, and used to go home from Mrs. Nelson's "Bell Inn," Aldgate—but that is not to the point.) The next morning, of course, we were an hour before the time. I and another boy shared a hackney-coach, two-and-six; porter for putting luggage on coach, threepence. I had no more money of my own left. Rasherwell, my companion, went into the "Bolt-in-Tun" coffee-room, and had a good breakfast. I couldn't: because, though I had five-and-twenty shillings of my parents' money, I had none of my own, you see.

I certainly intended to go without breakfast, and still remember how strongly I had that resolution in my mind. But there was that hour to wait. A beautiful August morning—I am very hungry. There is Rasherwell "tucking" away in the coffee-room. I pace the street, as sadly almost as if I had been coming to school, not going thence. I turn into a court by mere chance—I vow it was by mere chance—and there I see a coffee-shop with a placard in the window, "Coffee, Twopence. Round of buttered toast, Twopence." And here am I, hungry, penniless, with five-and-twenty shillings of my parents' money in my pocket.

What would you have done? You see I had had my money, and spent it in that pencil-case affair. The five-and-twenty shillings were a trust—by me to be handed over.

But then would my parents wish their only child to be actually without breakfast? Having this money, and being so hungry, so

very hungry, mightn't I take ever so little? Mightn't I at home eat as much as I chose?

Well, I went into the coffee-shop, and spent fourpence. I remember the taste of the coffee and toast to this day—a peculiar, muddy, not-sweet-enough, most fragrant coffee—a rich, rancid, yet not-buttered-enough, delicious toast. The waiter had nothing. At any rate, fourpence, I know, was the sum I spent. And the hunger appeased, I got on the coach a guilty being.

At the last stage,—what is its name? I have forgotten in seven-and-thirty years,—there is an inn with a little green and trees before it; and by the trees there is an open carriage. It is our carriage. Yes, there are Prince and Blucher, the horses; and my parents in the carriage. Oh! how I had been counting the days until this one came! Oh! how happy had I been to see them yesterday! But there was that fourpence. All the journey down the toast had choked me, and the coffee poisoned me.

I was in such a state of remorse about the fourpence, that I forgot the maternal joy and caresses, the tender paternal voice. I pull out the twenty-four shillings and eightpence with a trembling hand.

"Here's your money," I gasp out, "which Mr. P—— owes you, all but fourpence. I owed three-and-sixpence to Hawker out of my money for a pencil-case, and I had none left, and I took fourpence of yours, and had some coffee at a shop."

I suppose I must have been choking whilst uttering this confession.

"My dear boy," says the governor, "why didn't you go and breakfast at the hotel?"

"He must be starved," says my mother.

I had confessed; I had been a prodigal; I had been taken back to my parents' arms again. It was not a very great crime as yet, or a very long career of prodigality; but don't we know that a boy who takes a pin which is not his own, will take a thousand pounds when occasion serves, bring his parents' grey heads with sorrow to the grave, and carry his own to the gallows? Witness the career of Dick Idle, upon whom our friend Mr. Sala has been discoursing. Dick only began by playing pitch-and-toss on a tombstone: playing fair, for what we know: and even for that sin he was promptly caned by the beadle. The bamboo was ineffectual to cane that reprobate's bad courses out of him. From pitch-and-toss he proceeded to manslaughter if necessary: to highway robbery; to Tyburn and the rope there. Ah! Heaven be thanked, my parents' heads are still above the grass, and mine still out of the noose.

A RIDING LESSON.

As I look up from my desk, I see Tunbridge Wells Common and the rocks, the strange familiar place which I remember forty years ago. Boys saunter over the green with stumps and cricket-bats. Other boys gallop by on the riding-master's hacks. I protest it is "Cramp, Riding Master," as it used to be in the reign of George IV., and that Centaur Cramp must be at least a hundred years old. Yonder comes a footman with a bundle of novels from the library. Are they as good as *our* novels? Oh! how delightful they were! Shades of Valancour, awful ghost of Manfroni, how I shudder at your appearance! Sweet image of Thaddeus of Warsaw, how often has this almost infantile hand tried to depict you in a Polish cap and richly embroidered tights! And as for Corinthian Tom in light blue pantaloons and hessians, and Jerry Hawthorn from the country, can all the fashion, can all the splendour of real life which these eyes have subsequently beheld, can all the wit I have heard or read in later times, compare with your fashion, with your brilliancy, with your delightful grace, and sparkling vivacious rattle?

Who knows? They *may* have kept those very books at the library still—at the well-remembered library on the Pantiles, where they sell that delightful, useful Tunbridge ware. I will go and see. I wend my way to the Pantiles, the queer little old-world Pantiles, where, a hundred years since, so much good company came to take its pleasure. Is it possible, that in the past century, gentlefolks of the first rank (as I read lately in a lecture on George II. in the *Cornhill Magazine*) assembled here and entertained each other with gaming, dancing, fiddling, and tea? There are fiddlers, harpers, and trumpeters performing at this moment in a weak little old balcony, but where is the fine company? Where are the earls, duchesses, bishops, and magnificent embroidered gamesters? A half-dozen of children and their nurses are listening to the musicians; an old lady or two in a poke bonnet passes; and for the rest, I see but an uninteresting population of native tradesmen. As for the library, its window is full of pictures of burly theologians, and their works, sermons, apologues, and so forth. Can I go in and ask the young ladies at the counter for "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," and "Life in London, or the Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, Esquire, and their friend Bob Logic"?—absurd. I turn away abashed from the casement—from the Pantiles—no longer Pantiles, but Parade. I stroll over the Common and survey the beautiful purple hills around, twinkling with a thousand bright villas, which have sprung up over this charming ground since first I saw it. What an admirable scene of peace and plenty. What a delicious air breathes over the heath,

blows the cloud-shadows across it, and murmurs through the full-clad trees! Can the world show a land fairer, richer, more cheerful? I see a portion of it when I look up from the window at which I write. But fair scene, green woods, bright terraces gleaming in sunshine, and purple clouds swollen with summer rain—nay, the very pages over which my head bends—disappear from before my eyes. They are looking backwards, back into forty years off, into a dark room, into a little house hard by on the Common here, in the Bartlemytide holidays. The parents have gone to town for two days: the house is all his own, his own and a grim old maid-servant's, and a little boy is seated at night in the lonely drawing-room, poring over "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," so frightened that he scarcely dares to turn round.

DE JUVENTUTE

OUR last paper of this veracious and roundabout series related to a period which can only be historical to a great number of readers of this Magazine.* Four I saw at the station to-day with orange-covered books in their hands, who can but have known George IV. by books, and statues, and pictures. Elderly gentlemen were in their prime, old men in their middle age, when he reigned over us. His image remains on coins; on a picture or two hanging here and there in a Club or old-fashioned dining-room; on horseback, as at Trafalgar Square, for example, where I defy any monarch to look more uncomfortable. He turns up in sundry memoirs and histories which have been published of late days; in Mr. Massey's "History"; in the "Buckingham and Grenville Correspondence"; and gentlemen who have accused a certain writer of disloyalty are referred to those volumes to see whether the picture drawn of George is overcharged. Charon has paddled him off; he has mingled with the crowded republic of the dead. His effigy smiles from a canvas or two. Breechless he bestrides his steed in Trafalgar Square. I believe he still wears his robes at Madame Tussaud's (Madame herself having quitted Baker Street and life, and found him she modelled t'other side the Stygian stream). On the head of a five-shilling piece we still occasionally come upon him, with Saint George, the dragon-slayer, on the other side of the coin. Ah me! did this George slay many dragons? Was he a brave, heroic champion, and rescuer of virgins? Well! well! have you and I overcome all the dragons that assail *us?* come alive and victorious out of all the caverns which we have entered in life, and succoured, at risk of life and limb, all poor distressed persons in whose naked limbs the dragon Poverty is about to fasten his fangs, whom the dragon Crime is poisoning with his horrible breath, and about to crunch up and devour? O my Royal liege! O my gracious prince and warrior! *You* a champion to fight that monster? Your feeble spear ever pierce that slimy paunch or plated back? See how the flames come gurgling out of his red-hot brazen throat! What a roar!

* The *Cornhill Magazine.*

Nearer and nearer he trails, with eyes flaming like the lamps of a railroad engine. How he squeals, rushing out through the darkness of his tunnel! Now he is near. Now he is *here*. And now—what?—lance, shield, knight, feathers, horse and all? O horror, horror! Next day, round the monster's cave, there lie a few bones more. You, who wish to keep yours in your skins, be thankful that you are not called upon to go out and fight dragons. Be grateful that they don't sally out and swallow you. Keep a wise distance from their caves, lest you pay too dearly for approaching them. Remember that years passed, and whole districts were ravaged, before the warrior came who was able to cope with the devouring monster. When that knight *does* make his appearance, with all my heart let us go out and welcome him with our best songs, huzzas, and laurel wreaths, and eagerly recognise his valour and victory. But he comes only seldom. Countless knights were slain before Saint George won the battle. In the battle of life are we all going to try for the honours of championship? If we can do our duty, if we can keep our place pretty honourably through the combat, let us say, *Laus Deo!* at the end of it, as the firing ceases, and the night falls over the field.

The old were middle-aged, the elderly were in their prime, then, thirty years since, when yon Royal George was still fighting the dragon. As for you, my pretty lass, with your saucy hat and golden tresses tumbled in your net, and you, my spruce young gentleman in your mandarin's cap (the young folks at the country-place where I am staying are so attired), your parents were unknown to each other, and wore short frocks and short jackets, at the date of this five-shilling piece. Only to-day I met a dog-cart crammed with children—children with moustaches and mandarin caps—children with saucy hats and hair-nets—children in short frocks and knickerbockers (surely the prettiest boy's dress that has appeared these hundred years)—children from twenty years of age to six; and father, with mother by his side, driving in front—and on father's countenance I saw that very laugh which I remember perfectly in the time when this crown-piece was coined—in *his* time, in King George's time, when we were schoolboys seated on the same form. The smile was just as broad, as bright, as jolly, as I remember it in the past—unforgotten, though not seen or thought of, for how many decades of years, and quite and instantly familiar, though so long out of sight.

Any contemporary of that coin who takes it up and reads the inscription round the laurelled head, "Georgius IV. Britanniarum Rex Fid. Def. 1823," if he will but look steadily enough at the round, and utter the proper incantation, I daresay may conjure

back his life there. Look well, my elderly friend, and tell me what you see. First, I see a Sultan, with hair, beautiful hair, and a crown of laurels round his head, and his name is Georgius Rex Fid. Def., and so on. Now the Sultan has disappeared; and what is that I see? A boy,—a boy in a jacket. He is at a desk; he has great books before him, Latin and Greek books and dictionaries. Yes, but behind the great books, which he pretends to read, is a little one, with pictures, which he is really reading. It is—yes, I can read now—it is the "Heart of Midlothian," by the author of "Waverley"—or, no, it is "Life in London, or the Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, and their friend Bob Logic," by Pierce Egan; and it has pictures—oh! such funny pictures! As he reads, there comes behind the boy, a man, a dervish, in a black gown, like a woman, and a black square cap, and he has a book in each hand, and he seizes the boy who is reading the picture-book, and lays his head upon one of his books, and smacks it with the other. The boy makes faces, and so that picture disappears.

Now the boy has grown bigger. *He* has got on a black gown and cap, something like the dervish's. He is at a table, with ever so many bottles on it, and fruit, and tobacco; and other young dervishes come in. They seem as if they were singing. To them enters an old moollah, he takes down their names, and orders them all to go to bed. What is this? a carriage, with four beautiful horses all galloping—a man in red is blowing a trumpet. Many young men are on the carriage—one of them is driving the horses. Surely they won't drive into that—— Ah! they have all disappeared. And now I see one of the young men alone. He is walking in a street—a dark street; presently a light comes to a window. There is the shadow of a lady who passes. He stands there till the light goes out. Now he is in a room scribbling on a piece of paper, and kissing a miniature every now and then. They seem to be lines each pretty much of a length. I can read *heart, smart, dart; Mary, fairy; Cupid, stupid; true, you;* and never mind what more. Bah! it is bosh. Now see, he has got a gown on again, and a wig of white hair on his head, and he is sitting with other dervishes in a great room full of them, and on a throne in the middle is an old Sultan in scarlet, sitting before a desk, and he wears a wig too—and the young man gets up and speaks to him. And now what is here? He is in a room with ever so many children, and the miniature hanging up. Can it be a likeness of that woman who is sitting before that copper urn, with a silver vase in her hand, from which she is pouring hot liquor into cups? Was *she* ever a fairy? She is as fat as a hippopotamus now. He is sitting on a divan by the fire. He has a paper on his knees.

Read the name of the paper. It is the *Superfine Review*. It inclines to think that Mr. Dickens is not a true gentleman, that Mr. Thackeray is not a true gentleman, and that when the one is pert and the other is arch, we, the gentlemen of the *Superfine Review*, think, and think rightly, that we have some cause to be indignant. The great cause why modern humour and modern sentimentalism repel us, is that they are unwarrantably familiar. Now, Mr. Sterne, the Superfine Reviewer thinks, "was a true sentimentalist, because he was *above all things* a true gentleman." The flattering inference is obvious: let us be thankful for having an elegant moralist watching over us, and learn, if not too old, to imitate his high-bred politeness and catch his unobtrusive grace. If we are unwarrantably familiar, we know who is not. If we repel by pertness, we know who never does. If our language offends, we know whose is always modest. O pity! The vision has disappeared off the silver, the images of youth and the past are vanishing away! We who have lived before railways were made, belong to another world. In how many hours could the Prince of Wales drive from Brighton to London, with a light carriage built expressly, and relays of horses longing to gallop the next stage? Do you remember Sir Somebody, the coachman of the Age, who took our half-crown so affably? It was only yesterday; but what a gulf between now and then! *Then* was the old world. Stage-coaches, more or less swift, riding-horses, pack-horses, highwaymen, knights in armour, Norman invaders, Roman legions, Druids, Ancient Britons painted blue, and so forth—all these belong to the old period. I will concede a halt in the midst of it, and allow that gunpowder and printing tended to modernise the world. But your railroad starts the new era, and we of a certain age belong to the new time and the old one. We are of the time of chivalry as well as the Black Prince of Sir Walter Manny. We are of the age of steam. We have stepped out of the old world on to "Brunel's" vast deck, and across the waters *ingens patet tellus*. Towards what new continent are we wending? to what new laws, new manners, new politics, vast new expanses of liberties unknown as yet, or only surmised? I used to know a man who had invented a flying-machine. "Sir," he would say, "give me but five hundred pounds, and I will make it. It is so simple of construction that I tremble daily lest some other person should light upon and patent my discovery." Perhaps faith was wanting; perhaps the five hundred pounds. He is dead, and somebody else must make the flying-machine. But that will only be a step forward on the journey already begun since we quitted the old world. There it lies on the other side of yonder embankments. You young folk have never seen it; and Waterloo is to you no more than Agincourt, and George IV.

than Sardanapalus. We elderly people have lived in that præ-railroad world, which has passed into limbo and vanished from under us. I tell you it was firm under our feet once, and not long ago. They have raised those railroad embankments up, and shut off the old world that was behind them. Climb up that bank on which the irons are laid, and look to the other side—it is gone. There *is* no other side. Try and catch yesterday. Where is it? Here is a *Times* newspaper, dated Monday 26th, and this is Tuesday 27th. Suppose you deny there was such a day as yesterday!

We who lived before railways, and survive out of the ancient world, are like Father Noah and his family out of the Ark. The children will gather round and say to us patriarchs, "Tell us, grandpapa, about the old world." And we shall mumble our old stories; and we shall drop off one by one; and there will be fewer and fewer of us, and these very old and feeble. There will be but ten præ-railroadites left: then three—then two—then one—then 0! If the hippopotamus had the least sensibility (of which I cannot trace any signs either in his hide or his face), I think he would go down to the bottom of his tank, and never come up again. Does he not see that he belongs to bygone ages, and that his great hulking barrel of a body is out of place in these times? What has he in common with the brisk young life surrounding him? In the watches of the night, when the keepers are asleep, when the birds are on one leg, when even the little armadillo is quiet, and the monkeys have ceased their chatter,—he, I mean the hippopotamus, and the elephant, and the long-necked giraffe, perhaps may lay their heads together and have a colloquy about the great silent ante-diluvian world which they remember, where mighty monsters floundered through the ooze, crocodiles basked on the banks, and dragons darted out of the caves and waters before men were made to slay them. We who lived before railways are antediluvians—we must pass away. We are growing scarcer every day; and old—old—very old relicts of the times when George was still fighting the Dragon.

Not long since, a company of horse-riders paid a visit to our watering-place. We went to see them, and I bethought me that young Walter Juvenis, who was in the place, might like also to witness the performance. A pantomime is not always amusing to persons who have attained a certain age; but a boy at a pantomime is always amused and amusing, and to see his pleasure is good for most hypochondriacs.

We sent to Walter's mother, requesting that he might join us, and the kind lady replied that the boy had already been at the morning performance of the equestrians, but was most eager to go in the evening likewise. And go he did, and laughed at all Mr.

Merryman's remarks, though he remembered them with remarkable accuracy, and insisted upon waiting to the very end of the fun, and was only induced to retire just before its conclusion by representations that the ladies of the party would be incommoded if they were to wait and undergo the rush and trample of the crowd round about. When this fact was pointed out to him, he yielded at once, though with a heavy heart, his eyes looking longingly towards the ring as we retreated out of the booth. We were scarcely clear of the place, when we heard "God Save the Queen," played by the equestrian band, the signal that all was over. Our companion entertained us with scraps of the dialogue on our way home—precious crumbs of wit which he had brought away from that feast. He laughed over them again as we walked under the stars. He has them now, and takes them out of the pocket of his memory, and crunches a bit, and relishes it with a sentimental tenderness, too, for he is, no doubt, back at school by this time; the holidays are over; and Doctor Birch's young friends have reassembled.

Queer jokes, which caused a thousand simple mouths to grin! As the jaded Merryman uttered them to the old gentleman with the whip, some of the old folks in the audience, I daresay, indulged in reflections of their own. There was one joke—I utterly forget it—but it began with Merryman saying what he had for dinner. He had mutton for dinner, at one o'clock, after which "he had to *come to business.*" And then came the point. Walter Juvenis, Esquire, Reverend Doctor Birch's, Market Rodborough, if you read this, will you please send me a line, and let me know what was the joke Mr. Merryman made about having his dinner? *You* remember well enough. But do I want to know? Suppose a boy takes a favourite long-cherished lump of cake out of his pocket, and offers you a bite? *Merci!* The fact is, I *don't* care much about knowing that joke of Mr. Merryman's.

But whilst he was talking about his dinner, and his mutton, and his landlord, and his business, I felt a great interest about Mr. M. in private life—about his wife, lodgings, earnings, and general history, and I daresay was forming a picture of those in my mind:—wife cooking the mutton; children waiting for it; Merryman in his plain clothes, and so forth; during which contemplation the joke was uttered and laughed at, and Mr. M., resuming his professional duties, was tumbling over head and heels. Do not suppose I am going, *sicut est mos*, to indulge in moralities about buffoons, paint, motley, and mountebanking. Nay, Prime Ministers rehearse their jokes; Opposition leaders prepare and polish them; Tabernacle preachers must arrange them in their minds before they utter them. All I mean is, that I would like

to know any one of these performers thoroughly, and out of his uniform: that preacher, and why in his travels this and that point struck him; wherein lies his power of pathos, humour, eloquence; —that Minister of State, and what moves him, and how his private heart is working;—I would only say that, at a certain time of life, certain things cease to interest: but about *some* things when we cease to care, what will be the use of life, sight, hearing? Poems are written, and we cease to admire. Lady Jones invites us, and we yawn; she ceases to invite us, and we are resigned. The last time I saw a ballet at the opera—oh! it is many years ago—I fell asleep in the stalls, wagging my head in insane dreams, and I hope affording amusement to the company, while the feet of five hundred nymphs were cutting flicflacs on the stage at a few paces' distance. Ah, I remember a different state of things! *Credite posteri.* To see those nymphs—gracious powers, how beautiful they were! That leering, painted, shrivelled, thin-armed, thick-ankled old thing cutting dreary capers, coming thumping down on her board out of time—*that* an opera-dancer? Pooh! My dear Walter, the great difference between *my* time and yours, who will enter life some two or three years hence, is that, now, the dancing women and singing women are ludicrously old, out of time, and out of tune; the paint is so visible, and the dinge and wrinkles of their wretched old cotton stockings, that I am surprised how anybody can like to look at them. And as for laughing at *me* for falling asleep, I can't understand a man of sense doing otherwise. In *my* time, *à la bonne heure.* In the reign of George IV., I give you my honour, all the dancers at the opera were as beautiful as Houris. Even in William IV.'s time, when I think of Duvernay prancing in as the Bayadère,—I say it was a vision of loveliness such as mortal eyes can't see nowadays. How well I remember the tune to which she used to appear! Kaled used to say to the Sultan, "My lord, a troop of those dancing and singing gurls called Bayadères approaches," and, to the clash of cymbals, and the thumping of my heart, in she used to dance! There has never been anything like it—never. There never will be—I laugh to scorn old people who tell me about your Noblet, your Montessu, your Vestris, your Parisot—pshaw, the senile twaddlers! And the impudence of the young men, with their music and their dancers of to-day! I tell you the women are dreary old creatures. I tell you one air in an opera is just like another, and they send all rational creatures to sleep. Ah, Ronzi de Begnis, thou lovely one! Ah, Caradori, thou smiling angel! Ah, Malibran! Nay, I will come to modern times, and acknowledge that Lablache was a very good singer thirty years ago (though Porto was the boy for me):

and then we had Ambrogetti, and Curioni, and Donzelli, a rising young singer.

But what is most certain and lamentable is the decay of stage beauty since the days of George IV. Think of Sontag! I remember her in *Otello* and the *Donna del Lago* in '28. I remember being behind the scenes at the opera (where numbers of us young fellows of fashion used to go), and seeing Sontag let her hair fall down over her shoulders previous to her murder by Donzelli. Young fellows have never seen beauty like *that*, heard such a voice, seen such hair, such eyes. Don't tell *me!* A man who has been about town since the reign of George IV., ought he not to know better than you young lads who have seen nothing? The deterioration of women is lamentable; and the conceit of the young fellows more lamentable still, that they won't see this fact, but persist in thinking their time as good as ours.

Bless me! when I was a lad, the stage was covered with angels, who sang, acted, and danced. When I remember the Adelphi, and the actresses there: when I think of Miss Chester, and Miss Love, and Mrs. Serle at Sadler's Wells, and her forty glorious pupils—of the Opera and Noblet, and the exquisite young Taglioni, and Pauline Leroux, and a host more! One much-admired being of those days I confess I never cared for, and that was the chief *male* dancer—a very important personage then, with a bare neck, bare arms, a tunic, and a hat and feathers, who used to divide the applause with the ladies, and who has now sunk down a trap-door for ever. And this frank admission ought to show that I am not your mere twaddling *laudator temporis acti*—your old fogey who can see no good except in his own time.

They say that claret is better nowadays, and cookery much improved since the days of *my* monarch—of George IV. *Pastry cookery* is certainly not so good. I have often eaten half-a-crown's worth (including, I trust, ginger-beer) at our school pastrycook's, and that is a proof that the pastry must have been very good, for could I do as much now? I passed by the pastrycook's shop lately, having occasion to visit my old school. It looked a very dingy old baker's; misfortunes may have come over him—those penny tarts certainly did *not* look so nice as I remember them: but he may have grown careless as he has grown old (I should judge him to be now about ninety-six years of age), and his hand may have lost its cunning.

Not that we were not great epicures. I remember how we constantly grumbled at the quantity of the food in our master's house—which on my conscience I believe was excellent and plentiful—and how we tried once or twice to eat him out of house and

home. At the pastrycook's we may have over-eaten ourselves (I have admitted half-a-crown's worth for my own part, but I don't like to mention the *real* figure for fear of perverting the present generation of boys by my monstrous confession)—we may have eaten too much, I say. We did; but what then? The school apothecary was sent for: a couple of small globules at night, a trifling preparation of senna in the morning, and we had not to go to school, so that the draught was an actual pleasure.

For our amusements, besides the games in vogue, which were pretty much in old times as they are now (except cricket, *par exemple*—and I wish the present youth joy of their bowling, and suppose Armstrong and Whitworth will bowl at them with light field-pieces next), there were novels—ah! I trouble you to find such novels in the present day! O Scottish Chiefs, didn't we weep over you! O Mysteries of Udolpho, didn't I and Briggs Minor draw pictures out of you, as I have said? Efforts, feeble indeed, but still giving pleasure to us and our friends. "I say, old boy, draw us Vivaldi tortured in the Inquisition," or "Draw us Don Quixote and the windmills, you know," amateurs would say, to boys who had a love of drawing. "Peregrine Pickle" we liked, our fathers admiring it, and telling us (the sly old boys) it was capital fun; but I think I was rather bewildered by it, though "Roderick Random" was and remains delightful. I don't remember having Sterne in the school library, no doubt because the works of that divine were not considered decent for young people. Ah! not against thy genius, O father of Uncle Toby and Trim, would I say a word in disrespect. But I am thankful to live in times when men no longer have the temptation to write so as to call blushes on women's cheeks, and would shame to whisper wicked allusions to honest boys. Then, above all, we had Walter Scott, the kindly, the generous, the pure—the companion of what countless delightful hours; the purveyor of how much happiness; the friend whom we recall as the constant benefactor of our youth! How well I remember the type and the brownish paper of the old duodecimo "Tales of My Landlord!" I have never dared to read the "Pirate," and the "Bride of Lammermoor," or "Kenilworth," from that day to this, because the finale is unhappy, and people die, and are murdered at the end. But "Ivanhoe," and "Quentin Durward"! Oh for a half-holiday, and a quiet corner, and one of those books again! Those books, and perhaps those eyes with which we read them; and, it may be, the brains behind the eyes! It may be the tart was good; but how fresh the appetite was! If the gods would give me the desire of my heart, I should be able to write a story which boys would relish for the next few

dozen of centuries. The boy-critic loves the story: grown up, he loves the author who wrote the story. Hence the kindly tie is established between writer and reader, and lasts pretty nearly for life. I meet people now who don't care for Walter Scott, or the "Arabian Nights"; I am sorry for them, unless they in their time have found *their* romancer—their charming Scheherazade. By the way, Walter, when you are writing, tell me who is the favourite novelist in the fourth form now? Have you got anything so good and kindly as dear Miss Edgeworth's "Frank"? It used to belong to a fellow's sisters generally; but though he pretended to despise it, and said, "Oh, stuff for girls!" he read it; and I think there were one or two passages which would try my eyes now, were I to meet with the little book.

As for Thomas and Jeremiah (it is only my witty way of calling Tom and Jerry), I went to the British Museum the other day on purpose to get it; but somehow, if you will press the question so closely, on reperusal, Tom and Jerry is not so brilliant as I had supposed it to be. The pictures are just as fine as ever; and I shook hands with broad-backed Jerry Hawthorn and Corinthian Tom with delight, after many years' absence. But the style of the writing, I own, was not pleasing to me; I even thought it a little vulgar—well! well! other writers have been considered vulgar—and, as a description of the sports and amusements of London in the ancient times, more curious than amusing.

But the pictures!—oh! the pictures are noble still! First, there is Jerry arriving from the country, in a green coat and leather gaiters, and being measured for a fashionable suit at Corinthian House, by Corinthian Tom's tailor. Then away for the career of pleasure and fashion. The park! delicious excitement! The theatre! the saloon!! the green-room!!! Rapturous bliss—the opera itself! and then perhaps to Temple Bar, to *knock down a Charley* there! There are Jerry and Tom, with their tights and little cocked hats, coming from the opera—very much as gentlemen in waiting on Royalty are habited now. There they are at Almack's itself, amidst a crowd of high-bred personages, with the Duke of Clarence himself looking at them dancing. Now, strange change, they are in Tom Cribb's parlour, where they don't seem to be a whit less at home than in fashion's gilded halls: and now they are at Newgate, seeing the irons knocked off the malefactors' legs previous to execution. What hardened ferocity in the countenance of the desperado in yellow breeches! What compunction in the face of the gentleman in black (who, I suppose, has been forging), and who clasps his hands, and listens to the chaplain! Now we haste away to merrier scenes: to

Tattersall's (ah, gracious powers! what a funny fellow that actor was who performed Dicky Green in that scene at the play!); and now we are at a private party, at which Corinthian Tom is waltzing (and very gracefully, too, as you must confess) with Corinthian Kate, whilst Bob Logic, the Oxonian, is playing on the piano!

"After," the text says, "*the Oxonian* had played several pieces of lively music, he requested as a favour that Kate and his friend Tom would perform a waltz. Kate without any hesitation immediately stood up. Tom offered his hand to his fascinating partner, and the dance took place. The plate conveys a correct representation of the 'gay scene' at that precise moment. The anxiety of *the Oxonian* to witness the attitudes of the elegant pair had nearly

put a stop to their movements. On turning round from the pianoforte and presenting his comical *mug*, Kate could scarcely suppress a laugh."

And no wonder; just look at it now (as I have copied it to the best of my humble ability), and compare Master Logic's countenance and attitude with the splendid elegance of Tom! Now every London man is weary and *blasé*. There is an enjoyment of life in these young bucks of 1823 which contrasts strangely with our feelings of 1860. Here, for instance, is a specimen of their talk and walk.

"'If,' says Logic—'if *enjoyment* is your *motto*, you may make the most of an evening at Vauxhall, more than at any other place in the metropolis. It is all free and easy. Stay as long as you like, and depart when you think proper.'—'Your description is so flattering,' replied Jerry, 'that I do not care how soon the time arrives for us to start.' Logic proposed a '*bit of a stroll*' in order to get rid of an hour or two, which was immediately accepted by Tom and Jerry. A *turn* or two in Bond Street, a *stroll* through Piccadilly, a *look in* at Tattersall's, a *ramble* through Pall Mall, and a *strut* on the Corinthian path, fully occupied the time of our heroes until the hour for dinner arrived, when a few glasses of Tom's rich wines soon put them on the *qui vive*. Vauxhall was then the object in view, and the Trio started, bent upon enjoying the pleasures which this place so amply affords."

How nobly those inverted commas, those italics, those capitals, bring out the writer's wit and relieve the eye! They are as good as jokes, though you mayn't quite perceive the point. Mark the varieties of lounge in which the young men indulge—now *a stroll*, then *a look in*, then *a ramble*, and presently *a strut*. When George, Prince of Wales, was twenty, I have read in an old Magazine, "the Prince's lounge" was a peculiar manner of walking which the young bucks imitated. At Windsor George III. had *a cat's path*—a sly early walk which the good old King took in the grey morning before his household was astir. What was the Corinthian path here recorded? Does any antiquary know? And what were the rich wines which our friends took, and which enabled them to enjoy Vauxhall? Vauxhall is gone, but the wines which could occasion such a delightful perversion of the intellect as to enable it to enjoy ample pleasures there, what were they?

So the game of life proceeds, until Jerry Hawthorn, the rustic, is fairly knocked up by all this excitement and is forced to go home, and the last picture represents him getting into the coach at the

"White Horse Cellar," he being one of six inside; whilst his friends shake him by the hand; whilst the sailor mounts on the roof; whilst the Jews hang round with oranges, knives, and sealing-wax; whilst the guard is closing the door. Where are they now, those sealing-wax vendors? where are the guards? where are the jolly teams? where are the coaches? and where the youth that climbed inside and out of them; that heard the merry horn which sounds no more; that saw the sun rise over Stonehenge; that rubbed away the bitter tears at night after parting as the coach sped on the journey to school and London; that looked out with beating heart as the milestones flew by, for the welcome corner where began home and holidays?

It is night now: and here is home. Gathered under the quiet roof elders and children lie alike at rest. In the midst of a great peace and calm, the stars look out from the heavens. The silence is peopled with the past; sorrowful remorses for sins and shortcomings—memories of passionate joys and griefs rise out of their graves, both now alike calm and sad. Eyes, as I shut mine, look at me, that have long ceased to shine. The town and the fair landscape sleep under the starlight, wreathed in the autumn mists. Twinkling among the houses a light keeps watch here and there, in what may be a sick chamber or two. The clock tolls sweetly in the silent air. Here is night and rest. An awful sense of thanks makes the heart swell, and the head bow, as I pass to my room through the sleeping house, and feel as though a hushed blessing were upon it.

NOTES OF A WEEK'S HOLIDAY

MOST of us tell old stories in our families. The wife and children laugh for the hundredth time at the joke. The old servants (though old servants are fewer every day) nod and smile a recognition at the well-known anecdote. "Don't tell that story of Grouse in the gun-room," says Diggory to Mr. Hardcastle in the play, "or I must laugh." As we twaddle, and grow old and forgetful, we may tell an old story; or, out of mere benevolence, and a wish to amuse a friend when conversation is flagging, disinter a Joe Miller now and then: but the practice is not quite honest, and entails a certain necessity of hypocrisy on story hearers and tellers. It is a sad thing, to think that a man with what you call a fund of anecdote is a humbug, more or less amiable and pleasant. What right have I to tell my "Grouse in the gun-room" over and over in the presence of my wife, mother, mother-in-law, sons, daughters, old footman or parlour-maid, confidential clerk, curate, or what not? I smirk and go through the history, giving my admirable imitations of the characters introduced: I mimic Jones's grin, Hobbs's squint, Brown's stammer, Grady's brogue, Sandy's Scotch accent, to the best of my power: and the family part of my audience laughs good-humouredly. Perhaps the stranger, for whose amusement the performance is given, is amused by it, and laughs too. But this practice continued is not moral. This self-indulgence on your part, my dear Paterfamilias, is weak, vain—not to say culpable. I can imagine many a worthy man, who begins unguardedly to read this page, and comes to the present sentence, lying back in his chair, thinking of that story which he has told innocently for fifty years, and rather piteously owning to himself, "Well, well, it *is* wrong; I have no right to call on my poor wife to laugh, my daughters to affect to be amused, by that old old jest of mine. And they would have gone on laughing, and they would have pretended to be amused, to their dying day, if this man had not flung his damper over our hilarity." . . . I lay down the pen, and think, "Are there any old stories which I still tell myself in the bosom of my family? Have I any Grouse in my

gun-room?" If there are such, it is because my memory fails; not because I want applause, and wantonly repeat myself. You see men with the so-called fund of anecdote will not repeat the same story to the same individual; but they do think that, on a new party, the repetition of a joke ever so old may be honourably tried. I meet men walking the London streets, bearing the best reputation, men of anecdotal powers:—I know such, who very likely will read this, and say, "Hang the fellow, he means *me!*" And so I do. No—no man ought to tell an anecdote more than thrice, let us say, unless he is sure he is speaking only to give pleasure to his hearers—unless he feels that it is not a mere desire for praise which makes him open his jaws.

And is it not with writers as with *raconteurs?* Ought they not to have their ingenuous modesty? May authors tell old stories, and how many times over? When I come to look at a place which I have visited any time these twenty or thirty years, I recall not the place merely, but the sensations I had at first seeing it, and which are quite different to my feelings to-day. That first day at Calais: the voices of the women crying out at night, as the vessel came alongside the pier; the supper at Quillacq's and the flavour of the cutlets and wine; the red-calico canopy under which I slept; the tiled floor, and the fresh smell of the sheets; the wonderful postillion in his jack-boots and pigtail;—all return with perfect clearness to my mind, and I am seeing them, and not the objects which are actually under my eyes. Here is Calais. Yonder is that commissioner I have known this score of years. Here are the women screaming and bustling over the baggage; the people at the passport-barrier who take your papers. My good people, I hardly see you. You no more interest me than a dozen orange-women in Covent Garden, or a shop book-keeper in Oxford Street. But you make me think of a time when you were indeed wonderful to behold—when the little French soldiers wore white cockades in their shakos—when the diligence was forty hours going to Paris; and the great-booted postillion, as surveyed by youthful eyes from the coupé, with his *jurons*, his ends of rope for the harness, and his clubbed pigtail, was a wonderful being, and productive of endless amusement. You young folks don't remember the apple girls who used to follow the diligence up the hill beyond Boulogne, and the delights of the jolly road? In making Continental journeys with young folk, an oldster may be very quiet, and, to outward appearance, melancholy; but really he has gone back to the days of his youth, and he is seventeen or eighteen years of age (as the case may be), and is amusing himself with all his might. He is noting the horses as they come squealing out of the post-house yard at mid-

night; he is enjoying the delicious meals at Beauvais and Amiens, and quaffing *ad libitum* the rich table-d'hôte wine; he is hail-fellow with the conductor, and alive to all the incidents of the road. A man can be alive in 1860 and 1830 at the same time, don't you see? Bodily, I may be in 1860, inert, silent, torpid; but in the spirit I am walking about in 1828, let us say:—in a blue dress-coat and brass buttons, a sweet figured silk waistcoat (which I button round a slim waist with perfect ease), looking at beautiful beings with gigot sleeves and tea-tray hats under the golden chestnuts of the Tuileries, or round the Place Vendôme, where the *drapeau blanc* is floating from the statueless column. Shall we go and dine at "Bombarda's," near the "Hôtel Breteuil," or at the "Café Virginie"?—Away! "Bombarda's" and the "Hôtel Breteuil" have been pulled down ever so long. They knocked down the poor old Virginian Coffee-house last year. My spirit goes and dines there. My body, perhaps, is seated with ever so many people in a railway-carriage, and no wonder my companions find me dull and silent. Have you read Mr. Dale Owen's "Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World"?—(My dear sir, it will make your hair stand quite refreshingly on end.) In that work you will read that when gentlemen's or ladies' spirits travel off a few score or thousand miles to visit a friend, their bodies lie quiet and in a torpid state in their beds or in their arm-chairs at home. So in this way I am absent. My soul whisks away thirty years back into the past. I am looking out anxiously for a beard. I am getting past the age of loving Byron's poems, and pretend that I like Wordsworth and Shelley much better. Nothing I eat or drink (in reason) disagrees with me; and I know whom I think to be the most lovely creature in the world. Ah, dear maid (of that remote but well-remembered period), are you a wife or widow now?—are you dead?—are you thin and withered and old?—or are you grown much stouter, with a false front?—and so forth.

O Eliza, Eliza!—Stay, *was* she Eliza? Well, I protest I have forgotten what your Christian name was. You know I only met you for two days, but your sweet face is before me now, and the roses blooming on it are as fresh as in that time of May. Ah, dear Miss X——, my timid youth and ingenuous modesty would never have allowed me, even in my private thoughts, to address you otherwise than by your paternal name, but *that* (though I conceal it) I remember perfectly well, and that your dear and respected father was a brewer.

Carillon.—I was awakened this morning with the chime which Antwerp cathedral clock plays at half-hours. The tune has

been haunting me ever since, as tunes will. You dress, eat, drink, walk, and talk to yourself to their tune: their inaudible jingle accompanies you all day: you read the sentences of the paper to their rhythm. I tried uncouthly to imitate the tune to the ladies of the family at breakfast, and they say it is the Shadow Dance of "Dinorah." It may be so. I dimly remember that my body was once present during the performance of that opera, whilst my eyes were closed, and my intellectual faculties dormant at the back of the box; howbeit, I have learned that shadow dance from hearing it pealing up ever so high in the air, at night, morn, noon.

How pleasant to lie awake and listen to the cheery peal! whilst the old city is asleep at midnight, or waking up rosy at sunrise, or basking in noon, or swept by the scudding rain which drives in gusts over the broad places, and the great shining river; or sparkling in snow which dresses up a hundred thousand masts, peaks, and towers; or wrapt round with thunder-cloud canopies, before which the white gables shine whiter; day and night the kind little carillon plays its fantastic melodies overhead. The bells go on ringing. *Quot vivos vocant, mortuos plangunt, fulgura frangunt;* so on to the past and future tenses, and for how many nights, days, and years! Whilst the French were pitching their *fulgura* into Chassé's citadel, the bells went on ringing quite cheerfully. Whilst the scaffolds were up and guarded by Alva's soldiery, and regiments of penitents, blue, black, and grey, poured out of churches and convents, droning their dirges, and marching to the place of the Hôtel de Ville, where heretics and rebels were to meet their doom, the bells up yonder were chanting at their appointed half-hours and quarters, and rang the *mauvais quart d'heure* for many a poor soul. This bell can see as far away as the towers and dykes of Rotterdam. That one can call a greeting to St. Ursula's at Brussels, and toss a recognition to that one at the town-hall of Oudenarde, and remember how after a great struggle there a hundred and fifty years ago the whole plain was covered with the flying French cavalry—Burgundy, and Berri, and the Chevalier of St. George flying like the rest. "What is your clamour about Oudenarde?" says another bell (Bob Major *this* one must be). "Be still, thou querulous old clapper! *I* can see over to Hougoumont and Saint John. And about forty-five years since, I rang all through one Sunday in June, when there was such a battle going on in the cornfields there, as none of you others ever heard tolled of. Yes, from morning service until after vespers, the French and English were all at it, ding-dong." And then calls of business intervening, the bells have to give up their private jingle, resume their professional duty, and sing their hourly chorus out of "Dinorah."

What a prodigious distance those bells can be heard! I was awakened this morning to their tune, I say. I have been hearing it constantly ever since. And this house whence I write, Murray says, is two hundred and ten miles from Antwerp. And it is a week off; and there is the bell still jangling its Shadow Dance out of "Dinorah." An audible shadow, you understand, and an invisible sound, but quite distinct; and a plague take the tune!

Under the Bells.—Who has not seen the church under the bells? Those lofty aisles, those twilight chapels, that cumbersome pulpit with its huge carvings, that wide grey pavement flecked with various light from the jewelled windows, those famous pictures between the voluminous columns over the altars, which twinkle with their ornaments, their votive little silver hearts, legs, limbs, their little guttering tapers, cups of sham roses, and what not? I saw two regiments of little scholars creeping in and forming square, each in its appointed place, under the vast roof; and teachers presently coming to them A stream of light from the jewelled windows beams slanting down upon each little squad of children, and the tall background of the church retires into a greyer gloom. Pattering little feet of laggards arriving echo through the great nave. They trot in and join their regiment, gathered under the slanting sunbeams. What are they learning? Is it truth? Those two grey ladies with their books in their hands in the midst of these little people have no doubt of the truth of every word they have printed under their eyes. Look, through the windows jewelled all over with saints the light comes streaming down from the sky, and Heaven's own illuminations paint the book! A sweet touching picture indeed it is, that of the little children assembled in this immense temple, which has endured for ages, and grave teachers bending over them. Yes, the picture is very pretty of the children and their teachers, and their book—but the text? Is it the truth, the only truth, nothing but the truth? If I thought so, I would go and sit down on the form *cum parvulis*, and learn the precious lesson with all my heart.

Beadle.—But I submit, an obstacle to conversions is the intrusion and impertinence of that Swiss fellow with the baldric—the officer who answers to the beadle of the British Islands, and is pacing about the church with an eye on the congregation. Now the boast of Catholics is that their churches are open to all; but in certain places and churches there are exceptions. At Rome I have been into Saint Peter's at all hours: the doors are always open,

the lamps are always burning, the faithful are for ever kneeling at one shrine or the other. But at Antwerp not so. In the afternoon you can go to the church, and be civilly treated; but you must pay a franc at the side gate. In the forenoon the doors are open, to be sure, and there is no one to levy an entrance fee. I was standing ever so still, looking through the great gates of the choir at the twinkling lights, and listening to the distant chants of the priests performing the service, when a sweet chorus from the organ-loft broke out behind me overhead, and I turned round. My friend the drum-major ecclesiastic was down upon me in a moment. "Do not turn your back to the altar during divine service," says he, in very intelligible English. I take the rebuke, and turn a soft right-about face, and listen awhile as the service continues. See it I cannot, nor the altar and its ministrants. We are separated from these by a great screen and closed gates of iron, through which the lamps glitter and the chant comes by gusts only. Seeing a score of children trotting down a side aisle, I think I may follow them. I am tired of looking at that hideous old pulpit with its grotesque monsters and decorations. I slip off to the side aisle; but my friend the drum-major is instantly after me—almost I thought he was going to lay hands on me. "You mustn't go there," says he; "you mustn't disturb the service." I was moving as quietly as might be, and ten paces off there were twenty children kicking and clattering at their ease. I point them out to the Swiss. "They come to pray," says he. "*You* don't come to pray, you——" "When I come to pay," says I, "I am welcome," and with this withering sarcasm, I walk out of church in a huff. I don't envy the feelings of that beadle after receiving point blank such a stroke of wit.

Leo Belgicus.—Perhaps you will say after this I am a prejudiced critic. I see the pictures in the cathedral fuming under the rudeness of that beadle, or, at the lawful hours and prices, pestered by a swarm of shabby touters, who come behind me chattering in bad English, and who would have me see the sights through their mean greedy eyes. Better see Rubens anywhere than in a church. At the Academy, for example, where you may study him at your leisure. But at church?—I would as soon ask Alexandre Dumas for a sermon. Either would paint you a martyrdom very fiercely and picturesquely—writhing muscles, flaming coals, scowling captains and executioners, swarming groups, and light, shade, colour, most dexterously brilliant or dark; but in Rubens I am admiring the performer rather than the piece. With what astonishing rapidity he travels over his canvas; how

tellingly the cool lights and warm shadows are made to contrast and relieve each other; how that blazing blowsy penitent in yellow satin and glittering hair carries down the stream of light across the picture! This is the way to work, my boys, and earn a hundred florins a day. See! I am as sure of my line as a skater of making his figure of eight! and down with a sweep goes a brawny arm or a flowing curl of drapery. The figures arrange themselves as if by magic. The paint-pots are exhausted in furnishing brown shadows. The pupils look wondering on, as the master careers over the canvas. Isabel or Helena, wife No. 1 or No. 2, are sitting by, buxom, exuberant, ready to be painted; and the children are boxing in the corner, waiting till they are wanted to figure as cherubs in the picture. Grave burghers and gentlefolks come in on a visit. There are oysters and Rhenish always ready on yonder table. Was there ever such a painter? He has been an ambassador, an actual Excellency, and what better man could be chosen? He speaks all the languages. He earns a hundred florins a day. Prodigious! Thirty-six thousand five hundred florins a year. Enormous! He rides out to his castle with a score of gentlemen after him, like the Governor. That is his own portrait as Saint George. You know he is an English knight? Those are his two wives as the two Maries. He chooses the handsomest wives. He rides the handsomest horses. He paints the handsomest pictures. He gets the handsomest prices for them. That slim young Van Dyck, who was his pupil, has genius too, and is painting all the noble ladies in England, and turning the heads of some of them. And Jordaens—what a droll dog and clever fellow! Have you seen his fat Silenus? The master himself could not paint better. And his altar-piece at Saint Bavon's? He can paint you anything, that Jordaens can—a drunken jollification of boors and doxies, or a martyr howling with half his skin off. What a knowledge of anatomy! But there is nothing like the master—nothing. He can paint you his thirty-six thousand five hundred florins' worth a year. Have you heard of what he has done for the French Court? Prodigious! I can't look at Rubens's pictures without fancying I see that handsome figure swaggering before the canvas. And Hans Hemmelinck at Bruges? Have you never seen that dear old hospital of Saint John, on passing the gate of which you enter into the fifteenth century? I see the wounded soldier still lingering in the house, and tended by the kind grey sisters. His little panel on its easel is placed in the light. He covers his board with the most wondrous beautiful little figures, in robes as bright as rubies and amethysts. I think he must have a magic glass, in which he catches the reflection of little

cherubs with many-coloured wings, very little and bright. Angels, in long crisp robes of white, surrounded with haloes of gold, come and flutter across the mirror, and he draws them. He hears mass every day. He fasts through Lent. No monk is more austere and holy than Hans. Which do you love best to behold, the lamb or the lion? the eagle rushing through the storm, and pouncing mayhap on carrion; or the linnet warbling on the spray?

By much the most delightful of the *Christopher* set of Rubens to my mind (and *ego* is introduced on these occasions, so that the opinion may pass only for my own, at the reader's humble service to be received or declined) is the "Presentation in the Temple"; splendid in colour, in sentiment sweet and tender, finely conveying the story. To be sure, all the others tell their tale unmistakably, witness that coarse "Salutation," that magnificent "Adoration of the Kings" (at the Museum), by the same strong downright hands; that wonderful "Communion of Saint Francis," which, I think, gives the key to the artist's *faire* better than any of his performances. I have passed hours before that picture in my time, trying and sometimes fancying I could understand by what masses and contrasts the artist arrived at his effect. In many others of the pictures parts of his method are painfully obvious, and you see how grief and agony are produced by blue lips, and eyes rolling bloodshot with dabs of vermilion. There is something simple in the practice. Contort the eyebrow sufficiently, and place the eyeball near it,—by a few lines you have anger or fierceness depicted. Give me a mouth with no special expression, and pop a dab of carmine at each extremity—and there are the lips smiling. This is art if you will, but a very naïve kind of art: and now you know the trick, don't you see how easy it is?

Tu Quoque.—Now you know the trick, suppose you take a canvas and see whether *you* can do it? There are brushes, palettes, and gallipots full of paint and varnish. Have you tried, my dear sir—you, who set up to be a connoisseur? Have you tried? I have—and many a day. And the end of the day's labour? O dismal conclusion! Is this puerile niggling, this feeble scrawl, this impotent rubbish, all you can produce—you, who but now found Rubens commonplace and vulgar, and were pointing out the tricks of his mystery? Pardon, O great chief, magnificent master and poet! You can *do*. We critics, who sneer and are wise, can but pry, and measure, and doubt, and carp. Look at the lion. Did you ever see such a gross, shaggy, mangy, roaring brute? Look at him eating lumps of raw meat—positively bleeding, and raw, and tough—till, faugh! it turns one's stomach to see him—O the

coarse wretch! Yes, but he is a lion. Rubens has lifted his great hand, and the mark he has made has endured for two centuries, and we still continue wondering at him, and admiring him. What a strength in that arm! What splendour of will hidden behind that tawny beard, and those honest eyes! Sharpen your pen, my good critic. Shoot a feather into him; hit him, and make him wince. Yes, you may hit him fair, and make him bleed, too; but, for all that, he is a lion—a mighty, conquering, generous, rampagious Leo Belgicus—monarch of his wood. And he is not dead yet, and I will not kick at him.

Sir Antony.—In that "Pietà" of Van Dyck, in the Museum, have you ever looked at the yellow-robed angel, with the black scarf thrown over her wings and robe? What a charming figure of grief and beauty! What a pretty compassion it inspires! It soothes and pleases me like a sweet rhythmic chant. See how delicately the yellow robe contrasts with the blue sky behind, and the scarf binds the two! If Rubens lacked grace, Van Dyck abounded in it. What a consummate elegance! What a perfect cavalier! No wonder the fine ladies in England admired Sir Antony. Look at——

Here the clock strikes three, and the three gendarmes who keep the Musée cry out, "Allons! Sortons! Il est trois heures! Allez! Sortez!" and they skip out of the gallery as happy as boys running from school. And we must go too, for though many stay behind—many Britons with Murray's Handbooks in their handsome hands—they have paid a franc for entrance-fee, you see; and we knew nothing about the franc for entrance until those gendarmes with sheathed sabres had driven us out of this Paradise.

But it was good to go and drive on the great quays, and see the ships unlading, and by the citadel, and wonder howabouts and whereabouts it was so strong. We expect a citadel to look like Gibraltar or Ehrenbreitstein at least. But in this one there is nothing to see but a flat plain and some ditches and some trees and mounds of uninteresting green. And then I remember how there was a boy at school, a little dumpy fellow of no personal appearance whatever, who couldn't be overcome except by a much bigger champion, and the immensest quantity of thrashing. A perfect citadel of a boy, with a General Chassé sitting in that bomb-proof casemate, his heart, letting blow after blow come thumping about his head, and never thinking of giving in.

And we go home, and we dine in the company of Britons, at the comfortable Hôtel du Parc, and we have bought a novel

apiece for a shilling, and every half-hour the sweet carillon plays the waltz from "Dinorah" in the air. And we have been happy; and it seems about a month since we left London yesterday; and nobody knows where we are, and we defy care and the postman.

Spoorweg.—Vast green flats, speckled by spotted cows, and bounded by a grey frontier of windmills; shining canals stretching through the green; odours like those exhaled from the Thames in the dog-days, and a fine pervading smell of cheese; little trim houses, with tall roofs, and great windows of many panes; gazebos, or summer-houses, hanging over pea-green canals; kind-looking dumpling-faced farmers' women, with laced caps, and golden frontlets and earrings; about the houses and towns which we pass a great air of comfort and neatness; a queer feeling of wonder that you can't understand what your fellow-passengers are saying, the tone of whose voices, and a certain comfortable dowdiness of dress, are so like our own;—whilst we are remarking on these sights, sounds, smells, the little railway journey from Rotterdam to the Hague comes to an end. I speak to the railway porters and hackney coachmen in English, and they reply in their own language, and it seems somehow as if we understood each other perfectly. The carriage drives to the handsome, comfortable, cheerful hotel. We sit down a score at the table; and there is one foreigner and his wife,—I mean every other man and woman at dinner are English. As we are close to the sea and in the midst of endless canals, we have no fish. We are reminded of dear England by the noble prices which we pay for wines. I confess I lost my temper yesterday at Rotterdam, where I had to pay a florin for a bottle of ale (the water not being drinkable, and country or Bavarian beer not being genteel enough for the hotel);—I confess, I say, that my fine temper was ruffled, when the bottle of pale ale turned out to be a pint bottle; and I meekly told the waiter that I had bought beer at Jerusalem at a less price. But then Rotterdam is eighteen hours from London, and the steamer with the passengers and beer comes up to the hotel windows; whilst to Jerusalem they have to carry the ale on camels' backs from Beyrout or Jaffa, and through hordes of marauding Arabs, who evidently don't care for pale ale, though I am told it is not forbidden in the Koran. Mine would have been very good, but I choked with rage whilst drinking it. A florin for a bottle, and that bottle having the words "imperial pint," in bold relief, on the surface! It was too much. I intended not to say anything about it; but I *must* speak. A florin a bottle, and that bottle a pint! Oh, for shame! for shame! I can't cork

down my indignation; I froth up with fury; I am pale with wrath, and bitter with scorn.

As we drove through the old city at night, how it swarmed and hummed with life! What a special clatter, crowd, and outcry there was in the Jewish quarter, where myriads of young ones were trotting about the fishy street! Why don't they have lamps? We passed by canals seeming so full that a pailful of water more would overflow the place. The *laquais-de-place* calls out the names of the buildings: the town-hall, the cathedral, the arsenal, the synagogue, the statue of Erasmus. Get along! *We* know the statue of Erasmus well enough. We pass over drawbridges by canals where thousands of barges are at roost. At roost—at rest! Shall *we* have rest in those bedrooms, those ancient lofty bedrooms, in that inn where we have to pay a florin for a pint of pa—psha! at the "New Bath Hotel" on the Boompjes? If this dreary edifice is the "New Bath," what must the Old Bath be like? As I feared to go to bed, I sat in the coffee-room as long as I might; but three young men were imparting their private adventures to each other with such freedom and liveliness that I felt I ought not to listen to their artless prattle. As I put the light out, and felt the bedclothes and darkness overwhelm me, it was with an awful sense of terror—that sort of sensation which I should think going down in a diving-bell would give. Suppose the apparatus goes wrong, and they don't understand your signal to mount? Suppose your matches miss fire when you wake; when you *want* them, when you will have to rise in half-an-hour, and do battle with the horrid enemy who crawls on you in the darkness? I protest I never was more surprised than when I woke and beheld the light of dawn. Indian birds and strange trees were visible on the ancient gilt hangings of the lofty chamber, and through the windows the Boompjes and the ships along the quay. We have all read of deserters being brought out, and made to kneel, with their eyes bandaged, and hearing the word to "Fire" given! I declare I underwent all the terrors of execution that night, and wonder how I ever escaped unwounded.

But if ever I go to the "Bath Hotel," Rotterdam, again, I am a Dutchman. A guilder for a bottle of pale ale, and that bottle a pint! Ah! for shame—for shame!

Mine Ease in Mine Inn.—Do you object to talk about inns? It always seems to me to be very good talk. Walter Scott is full of inns. In "Don Quixote" and "Gil Blas" there is plenty of inn-talk. Sterne, Fielding, and Smollett constantly speak about them; and, in their travels, the last two tot up the

bill, and describe the dinner quite honestly; whilst Mr. Sterne becomes sentimental over a cab, and weeps generous tears over a donkey.

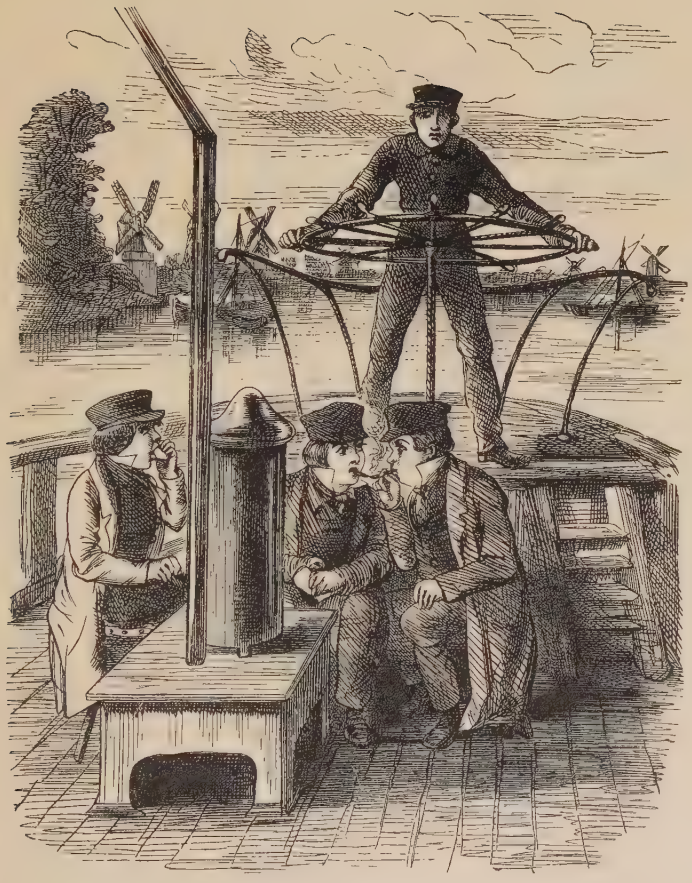
How I admire and wonder at the information in Murray's Handbooks—wonder how it is got, and admire the travellers who get it. For instance, you read: Amiens (please select your towns), 60,000 inhabitants. Hotels, &c.—"Lion d'Or," good and clean. "Le Lion d'Argent," so so. "Le Lion Noir," bad, dirty, and dear. Now, say, there are three travellers—three inn-inspectors, who are sent forth by Mr. Murray on a great commission, and who stop at every inn in the world. The eldest goes to the "Lion d'Or"—capital house, good table-d'hôte, excellent wine, moderate charges. The second commissioner tries the "Silver Lion"—tolerable house, bed, dinner, bill, and so forth. But fancy Commissioner No. 3—the poor fag, doubtless, and boots of the party. He has to go to the "Lion Noir." He knows he is to have a bad dinner—he eats it uncomplainingly. He is to have bad wine. He swallows it, grinding his wretched teeth, and aware that he will be unwell in consequence. He knows he is to have a dirty bed, and what he is to expect there. He pops out the candle. He sinks into those dingy sheets. He delivers over his body to the nightly tormentors, he pays an exorbitant bill, and he writes down, "Lion Noir, bad, dirty, dear." Next day the commission sets out for Arras, we will say, and they begin again: "Le Cochon d'Or," "Le Cochon d'Argent," "Le Cochon Noir"—and that is poor Boots's inn, of course. What a life that poor man must lead! What horrors of dinners he has to go through! What a hide he must have! And yet not impervious; for unless he is bitten, how is he to be able to warn others? No; on second thoughts, you will perceive that he ought to have a very delicate skin. The monsters ought to troop to him eagerly, and bite him instantaneously and freely, so that he may be able to warn all future handbook-buyers of their danger. I fancy this man devoting himself to danger, to dirt, to bad dinners, to sour wine, to damp beds, to midnight agonies, to extortionate bills. I admire him, I thank him. Think of this champion, who devotes his body for us—this dauntless gladiator going to do battle alone in the darkness, with no other armour than a light helmet of cotton, and a *lorica* of calico. I pity and honour him. Go, Spartacus! Go, devoted man—to bleed, to groan, to suffer—and smile in silence as the wild beasts assail thee!

How did I come into this talk? I protest it was the word inn set me off—and here is one, the "Hôtel de Belle Vue," at the Hague, as comfortable, as handsome, as cheerful as any I ever took

mine ease in. And the Bavarian beer, my dear friend, how good and brisk and light it is! Take another glass—it refreshes and does not stupefy—and then we will sally out, and see the town and the park and the pictures.

The prettiest little brick city, the pleasantest little park to ride in, the neatest comfortable people walking about, the canals not unsweet, and busy and picturesque with old-world life. Rows upon rows of houses, built with the neatest little bricks, with windows fresh painted, and tall doors polished and carved to a nicety. What a pleasant spacious garden our inn has, all sparkling with autumn flowers, and bedizened with statues! At the end is a row of trees, and a summer-house, over the canal, where you might go and smoke a pipe with Mynheer Van Dunck, and quite cheerfully catch the ague. Yesterday, as we passed, they were making hay, and stacking it in a barge which was lying by the meadow, handy. Round about Kensington Palace there are houses, roofs, chimneys, and bricks like these. I feel that a Dutchman is a man and a brother. It is very funny to read the newspaper, one can understand it somehow. Sure it is the neatest, gayest little city—scores and hundreds of mansions looking like Cheyne Walk, or the ladies' schools about Chiswick and Hackney.

Le Gros Lot.—To a few lucky men the chance befalls of reaching fame at once, and (if it is of any profit *morituro*) retaining the admiration of the world. Did poor Oliver, when he was at Leyden yonder, ever think that he should paint a little picture which should secure him the applause and pity of all Europe for a century after? He and Sterne drew the twenty thousand prize of fame. The latter had splendid instalments during his lifetime. The ladies pressed round him; the wits admired him; the fashion hailed the successor of Rabelais. Goldsmith's little gem was hardly so valued until later days. Their works still form the wonder and delight of the lovers of English art, and the pictures of the Vicar and Uncle Toby are among the masterpieces of our English school. Here in the Hague Gallery is Paul Potter's pale eager face, and yonder is the magnificent work by which the young fellow achieved his fame. How did you, so young, come to paint so well? What hidden power lay in that weakly lad, that enabled him to achieve such a wonderful victory? Could little Mozart, when he was five years old, tell you how he came to play those wonderful sonatas? Potter was gone out of the world before he was thirty, but left this prodigy (and I know not how many more specimens of his genius and skill) behind him. The details of this admirable picture are as curious as the effect is admirable and complete. The weather being unsettled,



LITTLE DUTCHMEN.

and clouds and sunshine in the gusty sky, we saw in our little tour numberless Paul Potters—the meadows streaked with sunshine and spotted with the cattle, the city twinkling in the distance, the thunder-clouds glooming overhead. Napoleon carried off the picture (*vide* Murray) amongst the spoils of his bow and spear to decorate his triumph at the Louvre. If I were a conquering prince, I would have this picture certainly, and the Raphael "Madonna" from Dresden, and the Titian "Assumption" from Venice, and that matchless Rembrandt of the "Dissection." The prostrate nations would howl with rage as my gendarmes took off the pictures, nicely packed, and addressed to "Mr. the Director of my Imperial Palace of the Louvre, at Paris. This side uppermost." The Austrians, Prussians, Saxons, Italians, &c., should be free to come and visit my capital, and bleat with tears before the pictures torn from their native cities. Their ambassadors would meekly remonstrate, and with faded grins make allusions to the feeling of despair occasioned by the absence of the beloved works of art! Bah! I would offer them a pinch of snuff out of my box as I walked along my gallery, with their Excellencies cringing after me. Zenobia was a fine woman and a queen, but she had to walk in Aurelian's triumph. The *procédé* was *peu délicat? En usez-vous, mon cher monsieur?* (The Marquis says the "Macaba" is delicious.) What a splendour of colour there is in that cloud! What a richness, what a freedom of handling, and what a marvellous precision! I trod upon your Excellency's corn!—a thousand pardons. His Excellency grins and declares that he rather likes to have his corns trodden on. Were you ever very angry with Soult—about that Murillo which we have bought? The veteran loved that picture because it saved the life of a fellow-creature—the fellow-creature who hid it, and whom the Duke intended to hang unless the picture was forthcoming.

We gave several thousand pounds for it—how many thousand? About its merit is a question of taste which we will not here argue. If you choose to place Murillo in the first class of painters, founding his claim upon these Virgin altar-pieces, I am your humble servant. Tom Moore painted altar-pieces as well as Milton, and warbled Sacred Songs and Loves of the Angels after his fashion. I wonder did Watteau ever try historical subjects? And as for Greuze, you know that his heads will fetch £1000, £1500, £2000—as much as a Sèvres *cabaret* of Rose du Barri. If cost price is to be your criterion of worth, what shall we say to that little receipt for ten pounds for the copyright of "Paradise Lost," which used to hang in old Mr. Rogers's room? When living painters, as frequently happens in our days, see their pictures sold at auctions for four or

five times the sums which they originally received, are they enraged or elated? A hundred years ago the state of the picture-market was different: that dreary old Italian stock was much higher than at present; Rembrandt himself, a close man, was known to be in difficulties. If ghosts are fond of money still, what a wrath his must be at the present value of his works!

The Hague Rembrandt is the greatest and grandest of all his pieces to my mind. Some of the heads are as sweetly and lightly painted as Gainsborough's; the faces not ugly, but delicate and high-bred; the exquisite grey tones are charming to mark and study; the heads not plastered, but painted with a free liquid brush: the result, one of the great victories won by this consummate chief, and left for the wonder and delight of succeeding ages.

The humblest volunteer in the ranks of art, who has served a campaign or two ever so ingloriously, has at least this good fortune of understanding, or fancying he is able to understand, how the battle has been fought, and how the engaged general won it. This is the Rhinelander's most brilliant achievement—victory—along the whole line. The "Night-watch" at Amsterdam is magnificent in parts, but on the side to the spectator's right, smoky and dim. The "Five Masters of the Drapers" is wonderful for depth, strength, brightness, massive power. What words are these to express a picture! to describe a description! I once saw a moon riding in the sky serenely, attended by her sparkling maids of honour, and a little lady said, with an air of great satisfaction, "*I must sketch it.*" Ah, my dear lady, if with an H.B., a Bristol board, and a bit of india-rubber, you can sketch the starry firmament on high, and the moon in her glory, I make you my compliment! I can't sketch "The Five Drapers" with any ink or pen at present at command—but can look with all my eyes, and be thankful to have seen such a masterpiece.

They say he was a moody, ill-conditioned man, the old tenant of the mill. What does he think of the "Vander Helst" which hangs opposite his "Night-watch," and which is one of the great pictures of the world? It is not painted by so great a man as Rembrandt; but there it is—to see it is an event of your life. Having beheld it, you have lived in the year 1648, and celebrated the Treaty of Münster. You have shaken the hands of the Dutch Guardsmen, eaten from their platters, drunk their Rhenish, heard their jokes as they wagged their jolly beards. The Amsterdam catalogue discourses thus about it:—a model catalogue: it gives you the prices paid, the signatures of the painters, a succinct description of the work.

"This masterpiece represents a banquet of the Civic Guard, which took place on the 18th June 1648, in the great hall of the St. Joris Doele, on the Singel at Amsterdam, to celebrate the conclusion of the Peace at Münster. The thirty-five figures composing the picture are all portraits.

"'The Captain WITSE' is placed at the head of the table, and attracts our attention first. He is dressed in black velvet, his breast covered with a cuirass, on his head a broad-brimmed black hat with white plumes. He is comfortably seated on a chair of black oak with a velvet cushion, and holds in his left hand, supported on his knee, a magnificent drinking-horn, surrounded by a St. George destroying the dragon, and ornamented with olive-leaves. The captain's features express cordiality and good-humour; he is grasping the hand of 'Lieutenant VAN WAVERN' seated near him in a habit of dark grey, with lace and buttons of gold, lace-collar and wrist-bands, his feet crossed, with boots of yellow leather, with large tops, and gold spurs, on his head a black hat and dark-brown plumes. Behind him, at the centre of the picture, is the standard-bearer, 'JACOB BANNING,' in an easy martial attitude, hat in hand, his right hand on his chair, his right leg on his left knee. He holds the flag of blue silk, in which the Virgin is embroidered" (such a silk! such a flag! such a piece of painting!), "emblematic of the town of Amsterdam. The banner covers his shoulder, and he looks towards the spectator frankly and complacently.

"The man behind him is probably one of the sergeants. His head is bare. He wears a cuirass, and yellow gloves, grey stockings, and boots with large tops, and kneecaps of cloth. He has a napkin on his knees, and in his hand a piece of ham, a slice of bread, and a knife. The old man behind is probably 'WILLIAM THE DRUMMER.' He has his hat in his right hand, and in his left a gold-footed wineglass, filled with white wine. He wears a red scarf, and a black satin doublet, with little slashes of yellow silk. Behind the drummer, two matchlock-men are seated at the end of the table. One in a large black habit, a napkin on his knee, a *hausse-col* of iron, and a linen scarf and collar. He is eating with his knife. The other holds a long glass of white wine. Four musketeers, with different shaped hats, are behind these, one holding a glass, the three others with their guns on their shoulders. Other guests are placed between the personage who is giving the toast and the standard-bearer. One with his hat off, and his hand uplifted, is talking to another. The second is carving a fowl. A third holds a silver plate; and another, in the background, a silver flagon, from which he fills a cup. The corner behind the captain is filled by two seated personages, one of whom is peeling an orange.

Two others are standing, armed with halberts, of whom one holds a plumed hat. Behind him are other three individuals, one of them holding a pewter pot, on which the name 'Poock,' the landlord of the 'Hotel Doele,' is engraved. At the back, a maid-servant is coming in with a pasty, crowned with a turkey. Most of the guests are listening to the captain. From an open window in the distance, the façades of two houses are seen, surmounted by stone figures of sheep."

There, now you know all about it: now you can go home and paint just such another. If you do, do pray remember to paint the hands of the figures as they are here depicted; they are as wonderful portraits as the faces. None of your slim Van Dyck elegancies, which have done duty at the cuffs of so many doublets; but each man with a hand for himself, as with a face for himself. I blushed for the coarseness of one of the chiefs in this great company, that fellow behind "WILLIAM THE DRUMMER," splendidly attired, sitting full in the face of the public; and holding a pork-bone in his hand. Suppose the *Saturday Review* critic were to come suddenly on this picture? Ah! what a shock it would give that noble nature! Why is that knuckle of pork not painted out? at any rate, why is not a little fringe of lace painted round it? or a cut pink paper? or couldn't a smelling-bottle be painted in instead, with a crest and a gold top, or a cambric pocket-handkerchief, in lieu of the horrid pig, with a pink coronet in the corner? or suppose you covered the man's hand (which is very coarse and strong), and gave him the decency of a kid glove? But a piece of pork in a naked hand? O nerves and eau-de-cologne, hide it, hide it!

In spite of this lamentable coarseness, my noble sergeant, give me thy hand as nature made it! A great, and famous, and noble handiwork I have seen here. Not the greatest picture in the world —not a work of the highest genius—but a performance so great, various, and admirable, so shrewd of humour, so wise of observation, so honest and complete of expression, that to have seen it has been a delight, and to remember it will be a pleasure for days to come. Well done, Bartholomeus Vander Helst! Brave, meritorious, victorious, happy Bartholomew, to whom it has been given to produce a masterpiece!

May I take off my hat and pay a respectful compliment to Jan Steen, Esquire? He is a glorious composer. His humour is as frank as Fielding's. Look at his own figure sitting in the window-sill yonder, and roaring with laughter! What a twinkle in the eyes! what a mouth it is for a song, or a joke, or a noggin! I think the composition in some of Jan's pictures amounts to the

sublime, and look at them with the same delight and admiration which I have felt before works of the very highest style. This gallery is admirable—and the city in which the gallery is, is perhaps even more wonderful and curious to behold than the gallery.

The first landing at Calais (or, I suppose, on any foreign shore) —the first sight of an Eastern city—the first view of Venice—and this of Amsterdam, are among the delightful shocks which I have had as a traveller. Amsterdam is as good as Venice, with a superadded humour and grotesqueness, which gives the sightseer the most singular zest and pleasure. A run through Pekin I could hardly fancy to be more odd, strange, and yet familiar. This rush, and crowd, and prodigious vitality; this immense swarm of life; these busy waters, crowding barges, swinging drawbridges, piled ancient gables, spacious markets teeming with people; that ever wonderful Jews' quarter; that dear old world of painting and the past, yet alive, and throbbing, and palpable—actual, and yet passing before you swiftly and strangely as a dream! Of the many journeys of this Roundabout life, that drive through Amsterdam is to be specially and gratefully remembered. You have never seen the palace of Amsterdam, my dear sir? Why, there's a marble hall in that palace that will frighten you as much as any hall in "Vathek," or a nightmare. At one end of that old, cold, glassy, glittering, ghostly, marble hall there stands a throne, on which a white marble king ought to sit with his white legs gleaming down into the white marble below, and his white eyes looking at a great white marble Atlas, who bears on his icy shoulders a blue globe as big as the full moon. If he were not a genie, and enchanted, and with a strength altogether hyperatlantean, he would drop the moon with a shriek on to the white marble floor, and it would splinter into perdition And the palace would rock, and heave, and tumble; and the waters would rise, rise, rise; and the gables sink, sink, sink; and the barges would rise up to the chimneys; and the water-souchee fishes would flap over the Boompjes, where the pigeons and storks used to perch; and the Amster, and the Rotter, and the Saar, and the Op, and all the dams of Holland would burst, and the Zuyder Zee roll over the dykes; and you would wake out of your dream, and find yourself sitting in your arm-chair.

Was it a dream? it seems like one. Have we been to Holland? have we heard the chimes at midnight at Antwerp? Were we really away for a week, or have I been sitting up in the room dozing, before this stale old desk? Here's the desk; yes. But, if it has been a dream, how could I have learned to hum that tune

out of "Dinorah"? Ah, is it that tune, or myself that I am humming? If it was a dream, how comes this yellow NOTICE DES TABLEAUX DU MUSÉE D'AMSTERDAM AVEC FACSIMILE DES MONOGRAMMES before me, and this signature of the gallant

Yes, indeed, it was a delightful little holiday; it lasted a whole week. With the exception of that little pint of *amari aliquid* at Rotterdam, we were all very happy. We might have gone on being happy for whoever knows how many days more? a week more, ten days more: who knows how long that dear teetotum happiness can be made to spin without toppling over?

But one of the party had desired letters to be sent *poste restante*, Amsterdam. The post-office is hard by that awful palace where the Atlas is, and which we really saw.

There was only one letter, you see. Only one chance of finding us. There it was. "The post has only this moment come in," says the smirking commissioner. And he hands over the paper, thinking he has done something clever.

Before the letter had been opened, I could read COME BACK, as clearly as if it had been painted on the wall. It was all over. The spell was broken. The sprightly little holiday fairy that had frisked and gambolled so kindly beside us for eight days of sunshine —or rain which was as cheerful as sunshine—gave a parting piteous look, and whisked away and vanished. And yonder scuds the postman, and here is the old desk.

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